

7<sup>th</sup> September 2020

## Training

**“Lord, we beseech thee to keep thy household the Church  
in continual godliness’.”**

*The Book of Common Prayer, Collect, 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Trinity*

Eusébio da Silva Ferreira – or just Eusébio – was a Portuguese footballer who is considered one of the greatest of all time. During his career he scored 733 goals in 745 games for Benfica and Portugal and carried the nicknames of “The Black Panther”, “The Black Pearl” or simply “o Rei”, The King. Eusébio won the *Ballon d’Or* award as European footballer of the year in 1965, and helped Portugal reach third place at the 1966 World Cup. And Eusébio was one of my all-time heroes when I was growing up.

Imagine my delight, therefore, in theological college, when a professor began a lecture with the word *eusebeia*. Fabulous! A teacher who could relate theology to my hero! But, no! The lecture *wasn’t* about football, but about the Greek word *eusebeia* from the New Testament.

*Eusebeia*, as a noun, is translated “godliness”, “piety”, or simply “religion”. As an adjective, it means “religiously minded”, and, as a verb, it gives us “to carry out the duties of true religion.” *Eusebeia* crops up ten times in what are known as the “Pastoral Epistles” – Timothy, Titus, Peter, and so on – and includes an exhortation to be godly, worthy of being a servant of God, a true worshipper. And tucked away in the middle of Paul’s first letter to his young friend, you have this verse. (1 Timothy 4:7):

*Have nothing to do with godless or silly myths. Train yourself in godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way ...*

“Continual godliness” doesn’t just happen because you take a label like “Christian”. It has to be worked at, with diligence, commitment, discipline, hard work. Training is always necessary. Eusébio was born with amazing footballing ability. But he also had to train to develop his skills. Perhaps my professor would have done well to mention that in his lecture too, and more of us might have understood the theme he was developing.

### **A prayer for today**

*Lord, I’ve given you my response. So now I give you my commitment to train hard,  
and to get better at the continual godliness you deserve. Amen*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon*

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