

I Train.

The operating philosophy behind the work.

ISSUED JULY 2026 · THE HOUSE OF LYONS · RWLYONSJR.COM

What do you call a man who stands in front of people and talks about what he knows? Call him a teacher, and you have named something honorable. Now ask a different question. What do you call a man who takes responsibility for what those people become? That is not the same office. That is a trainer, and the difference between the two is the difference this paper exists to name.

When people ask me what I do, I have learned to answer in two words. I train. Not because the other titles are untrue. I am a bishop, a pastor, a scholar, an author, and each of those names carries real weight in my life. But underneath every one of them runs a single conviction that has governed my work for over thirty years: information does not transform anyone. Formation does. And formation requires a trainer.

II

Teachers inform. Trainers form. A teacher can finish the hour when the material is covered. A trainer is not finished until the person can do what they could not do before, and do it when no one is watching. Teaching transfers content; training builds capacity. Teaching asks, did they understand it? Training asks a harder question: did it take?

Scripture knows this distinction, and it uses the language of the gymnasium to make it.¹ When Paul wrote to a young pastor he was forming, he did not tell Timothy to gather more information:

“On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.”

1 TIMOTHY 4:7 · NASB95

Discipline yourself. The word is gymnaze, the athlete’s word, the training-floor word. Godliness, in Paul’s instruction, is not absorbed in a lecture; it is built in repetitions. And when the same apostle described how the work passes from one generation to the next, he described a training chain, not a classroom:

“The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

2 TIMOTHY 2:2 · NASB95

*Transformation is never an accident.
It is always the fruit of training.*

III

To put this in other terms: real formation requires four things no lecture can deliver. It requires presence, because you cannot form what you will not stay close to. It requires repetition, because capacity is built the way muscle is built. It requires correction, because a trainer who will not tell you the truth about your form is letting you injure yourself slowly. And it requires practice, because the training floor, not the notebook, is where anything becomes yours.

This is why the work gathered in this house takes the shapes it takes. The books are ordered as days and repetitions, not chapters of theory. The courses put a tool in your hand and stand beside you while you learn its weight. The weekly table serves training portions, not commentary. None of it is content for its own sake. All of it is a training floor.

I train. It is two words, and it is the whole philosophy. Everything issued under this roof answers to it.

NOTES

1. The Greek gymnazo, from which English derives gymnasium, denotes athletic exercise and disciplined bodily training; Paul applies the athlete's vocabulary to formation in godliness.



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Paper No. 001 · I Train. · First issued July 2026 · rwlyonsjr.com/papers

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