

1 Timothy 4:11-16

By
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“Prescribe and teach these things. Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but *rather* in speech, conduct, love, faith *and* purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. Until I come, give attention to the *public* reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. Take pains with these things; be *absorbed* in them, so that your progress may be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”

Introduction

<Recording starts after sermon had already begun>

Churches invite me to come and preach at different times and I am glad to do it, and I will go and preach. But I will encourage them to understand something: anyone, in my opinion, can be a good preacher for one sermon. You might listen to me and because you don't know anything about me, you don't know the context of my life, I sound good or I tell funny stories, or this and that... so you gravitate towards that and you think I'm so exciting. But see, that is just a snapshot in an entire life. Anyone can preach one sermon and be dynamite. The question is, how does that individual live?

Can I tell you about one of the most forgettable times of preaching that I ever had? Forgettable only in the sense that those who listen to me could remember that I was there. I went up north with a good friend of mine (and we were both single guys back then or perhaps, I was just recently married); we headed up north and on our way up, all kinds of stuff happened. I used to drive this crazy mustang (it was all messed up and beat up) and up in the windy part of Modesto, the hood comes up on the freeway. We pull over and I couldn't get it to stay down. We were off on the side of a county road where we had nothing to tie this thing down with, so I started kicking the hood and for some reason it latched. It was all messed up.

The church hosting us was so gracious. They put us in a nice hotel. And when we pulled up into the valet in this old mustang with a mangled hood all mangled up, they must have thought, “What is going on?” We go to the hotel and there are so many crazy things that happened (which included my friend accidentally turning to a certain channel that was very inappropriate and immediately changed it and we were all freaking out). I said, “Man, they are never going to invite me back if they find out that there is some ‘adult something’ on the chart of this hotel.”

And there were so many crazy things and on top of that in one of the sermons, it might have been the very first sermon of that weekend, I forgot my notes and the drive from the hotel was about 6 miles—on the other side of San Francisco! When we got there, I'm preaching and doing the best that I can with no notes in front of me. I'm telling you that that was just forgettable. It was just atrocious.

The funny thing is that there were some there that came up to me afterwards and said, “That was a great sermon.” I'm thinking I'm glad that the Lord used me because I certainly didn't do anything. It's one of those things. There are times when things don't go right but my point is that anyone can be decent, as far as oratory issues are concerned, in a given instance. Anyone can bring the noise when it's for two or three sermons.

The question is: Can we teach? Can we minister? Can we shepherd with our lives as well as with our mouths? And if you want to look at it, that's what Paul is trying to get at this particular portion of Scripture. He is telling Timothy, his younger son, his spiritual son in the Lord, that these are the things that make for an excellent minister—an excellent minister not only in preaching, but also in life. This is how you can make a difference. This is how you can make an impact. This is how you can become a man of God, useful to Him, fulfilling the purpose for which you have been created, in the time which you live.

As we look at it together, we'll find ourselves desiring the same things, seeking out the same areas, desiring to be used of God for good purpose as young Timothy was. Let's pray and ask the Lord to shape our hearts and to conform us to His will, especially concerning the Scriptures this morning.

Heavenly Father,

We come before You Lord. We have stood together to praise Your name. We have sung songs about Your salvation and what it means to live for You and for You alone.

We have thought about You as Creator God who has made all things and fashioned this world, this incredible work of Your hand, Lord to demonstrate and display Your glory.

Father, I pray that as we look at this particular portion of Scripture now, that You would remind us, not just for those that are curious and interested in future ministry or mission field, but that every single Christian who call themselves Christian would look upon these commands, Lord and realize that each of us are called for the purpose of the ministry of the Word of God to all those around us.

Lord, help us to be careful and vigilant, all the more mindful Lord of how we live and what we believe and teach. So that when we look at these things, we might be able to minister, we might be able to be effectively accomplish that to which You have given our hands to do.

Make our lives useful Lord, there's no greater thing to ask of You this morning. Make our lives useful unto Your glory.

*I pray these things in Jesus name,
Amen.*

Let me read you this portion of Scripture before we get to it and I think you'll notice there are a number of commands here in [1 Timothy 4:11-16](#).

“Prescribe and teach these things. Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but *rather* in speech, conduct, love, faith *and* purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. Until I come, give attention to the *public reading of Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching. Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. Take pains with these things; be *absorbed* in them, so that your progress may be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”

Now if you have caught some of the imperatives, some of the commands that are given there, there are actually ten. So, obviously there's a particular portion of Scripture where Paul is laying it down. I mean, he's not saying, “Hey Timothy, can I remind you some things.” He is telling him to do this and this and there's a string of ten commands. I'll read you the imperatives again so that you can catch the flavor of what this portion of Scripture is trying to get across.

He says: 1) prescribe; 2) teach; 3) let no one look down on your youthfulness; 4) show yourself as an example; 5) give attention to the public reading; 6) Do not neglect the spiritual gift; 7) take pains with these things; 8) be absorbed in them; 9) pay close attention to yourself and your teaching; and 10) persevere in these things.

So, there are ten commands that hit us. It's like a shotgun approach to say “Timothy, all of these things are necessary if you want to make a difference.” And that's why in verses 11 and 12, I think the first place we want to plant our feet as far as how we are to be ministers. If we get a theme there, it might be just that. Make a difference with your life.

How to be an Excellent Minister—“Prescribe and Teach” (v. 11)

“Prescribe and teach these things.”

The first part of it is in verse 11. He says to take a balanced approach in how we exhort. He says to **“prescribe and teach these things.”** **“These things”** or the plural that Paul is addressing are all the things that have been mentioned previously, that God is the savior of all men. Preach that! Share the Gospel! That we should be thankful for everything that God has created in verse 4 because everything that God has created is good, nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude. Be thankful for the goodness of God and talking about and receiving all that is good. Enjoy the life that God has given you.

In all of these things, in terms of doctrine, in terms of preaching, he has talked about so many things and in all of these things, **“prescribe and teach them.”** The reason why I say that it is a balanced approach is because these two words are very different. They are synonymous in that they both talk about something that has to do with instructing or proclaiming or exhorting. But the two words are different in that the second word (what we have in our NAS) **“teach these things,”** it's our common word *didasko* (διδάσκει). It means “to teach.” In fact, it is very close to our English concept of teaching or giving instruction.

I mean we think of our teachers at school and for the most part we don't think of them as being crazy mean. We have a bunch of teachers in our midst. And for the most part, I think they are all nice. One or two, I don't know. But for the most part, they are very friendly, amicable; they are easy to talk to. Instruction and the term for teaching have to do with that. It means to instruct in very important and sensitive in particular issues but to do that in a manner that is normal, regular, not necessarily incredibly rigid and vigorous.

But the first word, where it says to “**prescribe and teach these things,**” the first word for “**prescribe,**” *paraggello* (παράγγελλε) has to do with authority, a command that comes from place of authority. It is used in particular for military commands and judicial injunctions. It's not an option. It's “you do this and do it now, that's an order soldier” and you're supposed to go about the task of it. So what you have here then is two prongs to the concept of instructing. Paul is saying that there is time when you need to tell them that this is the truth, and do the truth. And there is time when you have to say “Hey listen, I know what you are saying. But let's take a look at this a little bit. Let's see what the Scripture has to say about it. And let us reason in the Scriptures together.” There are both. I like what Chrysostom (one of the early church fathers who was known for preaching a lot of good sermons) says. He makes the point that in some situations, it requires authoritative command while in other situations, it requires gentle teaching. And to use the wrong approach in a situation can create difficulties.

In one situation as we look at Timothy's current ministry at this historical situation of the writing of 1 Timothy, sometimes he needs to make a command. And he is to make the command because these guys are idle talkers. They are talking about genealogies, mythologies, and foolishness! They are not talking about the living God who is the savior of all men; they are talking about foolish things and speculations. To that, Timothy is to put his foot down and say “stop!”

On the flip side, there are many who are uncertain of what they are supposed to think. These are false teachers in the church. Aren't they supposed to be responsible? In fact, they are older than Timothy. Shouldn't we at least consider some of what Timothy calls “mythologies” and some of the things that guys are saying, some secret knowledge or secret handshake, that involves our participation? Should we consider these things and to them Timothy is to use teaching and instruction? It is to make sure they understand what is right in the right moment.

It is a balanced approach. It is “both and,” not “either or.” In all things, a lot of times, our spiritual maturity banks whether or not we can get right in the balance between that which is gracious and that which is dogmatic truth. It is not “either or” but ought to be “both and.” We have the right thing to do at the right time and so if we want to make a difference, the first thing that Paul says to Timothy in verse 11 is “**Prescribe and teach these things.**” Some things you come down and make a command about. Some things you're going to have to instruct and be patient with. All of those you need the right approach and wisdom to make it right.

How to be an Excellent Minister—“Let no one look down on your youthfulness” (v. 12a)

“Let no one look down on your youthfulness ...”

I love this verse mostly because when I was a young believer in college at our bible study, we would sing this song: “Let no one look down on your youthfulness.” I remember this verse just because of this song. On that basis alone, I love this verse. But there is more to the verse than just a fun song.

It is a command, curiously enough, that Timothy is given and Paul says, “Do not let some despise your youthfulness.” Now, I use the word “despise” but the NAS uses “**let no one look down,**” but “despise” would be a better translation because it is a strong word. It's not just, “Hey, don't let people disregard you because you are young.” It means don't let them *disdain* the fact that you are young and to treat you *with malice* because of it.

The same word is used in [Matthew 6:24](#) when Jesus is talking about how you can't serve two masters. “*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and **despise** the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*” (Emphasis mine)

The same concept is here. Paul is saying, “Timothy, are you young? Yeah! Don't let anyone despise your youthfulness.” How young is Timothy? Is he 20 years old? Is he 19 years old? I mean how young is this guy? Well he is mostly likely somewhere in his mid 30's. You might be saying “Well, that's not young.” Yeah it is!

Now I am in my mid 30's as well as many of us in this room and it's a curious thing, and depending on where you look in church history, Ireneaus (one of the early church fathers) says about elders that “the age of 30 years is the prime of a young man's ability. And that it reaches even to his 40th year. Everyone will allow.”

It is common knowledge between your 30th year and 40th year you are in your prime. I believe that. And I'm trying to believe it, but my body is so sore, I don't know if I can believe that. The idea is that youthfulness was basically under 40ish. You would be considered “youth.” Can you imagine in the early church being part of the youth group? We would all be part of the youth group! Wouldn't that be hilarious? Then we can act as silly as we want like all the youth group kids do. Good times.

Timothy was probably in his mid 30's. A word in the same word group is *neophutos* (νεόφυτος); it means “new convert” or the “neophyte,” the “new believer.” A word similar to that is *neotes* (νεότητος), which means “I am young or youthful.”

The reason why there is a connection is because earlier in chapter 3 verse 6, Paul had said that in the selection of elders to be careful that not to choose a new convert. You have to be careful not about his age chronologically necessarily, but rather his spiritual maturity. And Timothy is in the "youth" group. He is a young guy. So you say "Timothy don't let them despise your youthfulness."

What do you think Timothy is supposed to do? I mean if you are reading this and you are Timothy and you are reading this slowly and carefully because you want every word and you read that and it says "**Let no one look down on your youthfulness**" then for a second you pause and go "Then what do you want me to do Paul? You want me to fight them? You want me to push them down the hallways? What am I suppose to do about that?" Paul gives him that!

This is how you keep them from looking down or from despising your youthfulness. "**But rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.**"

He rattles five particular attributes that he is to exemplify himself in but let me fixate our minds first on that last phrase.

How to be an Excellent Minister—"Show yourself as an example" (v. 12b)

"... but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe."

When it says, "**show yourself an example**" it is kind of an interesting idea. The term for "**example**" is the term *tupos* (τύπος) from which we get our word "type." We encounter that in the New Testament frequently. We encounter that a number of times in the book of Hebrews when it says that this guy was a "type" of the Lord.

The curious thing about that word, as one good commentator Cranfield point out, "it denotes a mark that is made by striking something. An impression made by something. Such an impression used in its turn as a mold to shape something else." In other words, it's the impression you leave. It's the "BAM" and you leave your mark.

We use the same metaphors in our English about "making an impact" or "leaving your mark." It's the same idea here of what he means by being an example. He doesn't mean to just showcase yourself, "I am *the* Christian man. Soldier, pay attention to me." No. He means live in such a way that you leave your mark. It is clear that you were there and that there is a difference because of your life.

William Mounce in his great commentary goes on to the same word idea and he says the word picture that it paints is not so much that Timothy is an example that others can emulate, but that he is a mold that should be pressed into the lives of others so that they attain the same shape. In other words, he is not just "Mr. Nice" or "won't-you-be-my-neighbor kind of thing. He is not just trying to be friendly and externally pleasant in personality. He is trying to make a difference. He is trying to make an impact.

If there is something that should be more than desirable in your life as Christians, it is to leave a mark; not for your own glory, not for your own self worth; not so that you would feel good about yourself but because God has given you a privilege. That privilege is that He has given your years of life on this planet as a redeemed and sanctified individual. He has granted to you life and He has granted to you a number of years after you have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. And during that period of time, however long or short that is, what you do, that is privilege. That's gravy! That's for you to make a difference and to leave your mark.

He says, "show yourself an example to those that believe." In fact, in many of our English translations, I think the preposition is improper. Most of them say something to the effect of "**show yourself an example of those who believe.**" In other words, be an example *of a believer*. I don't think that's what it is talking about. I think it is talking about "show yourself an example *to* those that believe." Leave a mark upon other believers. Encourage them to be further than you.

Let me illustrate it this way. There are a lot of things we might want for our children. I would like my kids (I have 2 daughters so far and I have a son on the way) to live fairly decent, happy lives. I definitely want them to live protected lives. I would like them to get married and have children and just enjoy all the normal things that are of life. But you know what? I think there is one thing that every parent has and we all share in common and that is that we would hope that their life in whatever category or quality we think of, that their life would be qualitatively better than ours. Isn't that the case?

In fact, I would want my children to be Christians a lot earlier than in my case which was my freshman year in college. I would want my children to know the things of the Scripture and to know the living God in a personal way much earlier than I did in the course of my life. I would want them to be able to have the confidence of knowing that God works, He works, He breathes, and despite the world that we live, we can live to His glory. And I want them to have that faith earlier and stronger and with greater affection; and to live a life that is greater, to leave a mark with their lives far greater than I can ever do with my life. I would desire that of you guys, too.

I am fairly young. I need to be careful that my youthfulness is not despised. And that can happen easily. In 2 Timothy, Paul reminds him to avoid youthful lusts. And it doesn't just mean sexual lust there. I think it means all kinds of youthful lusts; things like pride. There is that natural sense in which we are young and we think we are strong, we think we are so important. There is that natural sense in which we think we are more intelligent, more capable. I mean to put all of that stuff aside but there will be a time when I am a lot older. And there will be a time when I am old enough that there will be younger guys beneath us in this ministry.

You know what my desire would be for whoever takes and fills our shoes (as ministers and pastors of this church)? That they would be far and much more advanced than we ever were. Why would we want them to be lesser than us? Why would we want to have less, to be lesser in terms of giftedness, to be lesser in terms of their scholarship and their understanding of things? We want them to be greater! That's the mark we can leave! And guess what? That's the mark that you can leave. Not necessarily to other pastors but to other Christians that are gathered around you.

Do you love this family that is the church of Jesus Christ? Then minister to it in such a way that you don't just exemplify yourself, make a nice snapshot, and you are the Christian of the year but instead that you actually go make a difference in people's lives. That should be the burning desire of each one of us. That is part of the reason why we still are here so that we might still make an impact on each other.

"... but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe."

Here are the areas that we are to show ourselves as young ministers an example: "... in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity." Speech and conduct naturally, at least thematically, kind of go hand in hand. If we are to leave a mark, the question might be: "In what area are we to leave our mark?" And the marks of valor mentioned here is for "speech" and "conduct," that is, spoken word and living deeds. Both of those go hand in hand.

Marks of Valor—Speech & Conduct

When we talk about spoken word or "speech," it's that term *logos* (λόγος) again. It's that idea of the things we know, the ideas and the things that we speak. Speech, because they come out of formulated ideas, is so important. Human beings communicate. Some might argue so do dolphins. So do chimpanzees. There are studies that suggest that chimpanzees can coordinate each other to attack a foe or do something like that. I've never really studied those things I just assume that would be the case. They can communicate but when we talk about human beings communicating, we mean something far more than just the kind of communication exemplified by our little ones. It's fun watching all the little kids run around trying to talk with one another. That's simple communication.

But the gift of language, *logos*, to us, as we are created in God's image, means that we fashion our thoughts, we fashion our thinking, we actually create an understanding of stuff and we communicate those things. Not just "yes" and "no." We don't speak in machine language of "0's" and "1's." We actually use certain words. We use certain phrases. Certain phrases that get tossed around in every single church and every church has a subculture of phrases. We have too many. Everything from "quit messing around" to "hooy" and all this kind of crazy stuff that seems to come out, odd phrases that come in and out. That's all part of *logos*. These are things we think about in our hearts and they come out.

The important thing about the spoken word of God is in Matthew 15. Remember Jesus explains why He was upset with the Pharisees when they were talking about "You don't wash your hands or clean yourself properly before you eat" and He says this:

"But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."
(Matthew 15:18-20)

What comes out of the heart is the meditation of our hearts. And it comes out in our speech, in the things we talk about, the things we naturally say; the things we want to joke around about. He is saying, "Watch what you speak because it speaks about what is in your heart."

The second word is *anastrophé* (ἀναστροφή) which means to "live" or "conduct" your life in a manner that is appropriate. It's an interesting word. It's our word that we often translate into "walk" or to "move" through the course of living. It's the manner of life and it's what you speak, how you live, those things go hand in hand. Leave a mark concerning those things. Be exemplary in those things.

If we take that term of "leaving a mark" and we apply it to speech and to our lifestyle or our conduct, then you start to understand some things very particularly of what Paul is instructing Timothy. He is saying that what you speak, speak of things of God. Make a difference in the things you have to say and how you live—make a difference. If there is a choice between doing something that is normal, and doing something that would honor the Lord, to the encouragement of a believer, choose the one that encourages somebody. Choose the one that makes a difference.

You can say something mean and there's many an occasion and unfortunately, I take too many of those. I'll sarcastically say something. I've been getting on my oldest daughter Bekah because sometimes she will say stuff that is sarcastic and sometimes disrespectful. And I would ask, "What would make you say that? I don't know." She will apologize and stuff. And later I think about it and realize that she is just copying me! I am ripping on her all the time. We were playing a video game the other day during Thanksgiving time, and Bekah says "Dad, sometimes you say mean things." I can't deny it! I do! And I say "I'm sorry." And that is not a good thing. And I'm not encouraging it. I'm leaving the wrong mark on Bekah as far as some things.

If you think about it, what the Lord is commanding through Paul to Timothy and for all of us in the church, if you want to leave a mark, may it be in the way that you speak, the things that you say. Ask yourselves how you can live in such that you can make an impact upon others? Let's look at the other three imperatives and we need to move quickly through this.

Marks of Valor—Character (Love, Faith, Purity)

This is the second section of the marks of valor befitting character. Now when it says “love” it is our word **agape** (ἀγάπη). It means that natural love that is so Christian in its nature. It's sacrificial love. Paul has repeatedly used that term in his letters: “To put on love” (Colossians 3:14), “Walk in love as Christ loved you” (Ephesians 5:2), “Let all that you do be done in love” (1 Corinthians 16:14). Clearly, love is a natural thing for Paul to encourage Timothy to leave an impression about.

But here comes the rub—it's easy for us to talk about these esoteric ideas: let's all put on love and none of us have a single idea of what in the world we are talking about. When someone asked Jesus, “Hey Teacher, who is our neighbor? We got to love our neighbor so, who is our neighbor?” He said, “Let Me give you a story.” And he tells this story of how an enemy of a certain people group will help his hated enemy. He'll help him to his loss. He will pay for him to be cared for. He says, “I will promise you more money when I come back if more is necessary.” Does he want something in return from him? No. He just wants him to live. It's an act of generosity that has nothing to do with anything for himself and it is giving and giving until the point of pain.

What does it mean to be exemplary in love? What's the most generous thing you've done for somebody? If you are living in such a way that the most generous thing you done lately was last week, then God bless you! However, if you have to think, “Well, what's the most generous thing? I don't know if I've ever done anything that was generous, except I gave someone a ride once...” And you have to think back to the last time you were able to encourage somebody with an act or a service or with words, then can you be called loving?

He is commanding Timothy to display, to be marked out by love; the doing of stuff, the sacrificing of one another. If it is to give a gift, if it is just to give a kind word, if it is to give a call or just to do something—that is loving. And he is saying to do that. Not to be just a loving guy and when he comes to church, “Hey everybody, how you doing?” It's not about personality again! It's about what you do.

How about in “faith”? It's the word **pistis, pistos** or **pistoo** (πίστει). It's the word “to believe” or “to have faith.” And it's always a toss up because there are occasions where it means to have faith and to believe and there are occasions where it means “to be faithful” or “to be trustworthy.”

In this particular instance, I'm pretty sure it means “trustworthy.” The reason why is because I'm not sure if I can get my mind around it (and it might be my limitations), but I'm not sure what it would mean “he is to be exemplary to other Christians in his belief in Christ.” I'm not sure what that means. I think he is talking about trustworthiness.

In other words, when things are given to him by responsibility, he does them and he does them well. And the responsibility is given to him are not just passed down from other members of the church but from God, Himself. If he has a responsibility to not forsake the assembly, to encourage the body, he is there—he is there early. If there is something going on where he has to pray for people, he's the one that says, “Is there a meeting that we can get together and pray for people? I'm there!” It is to take advantage.

Do you have to take advantage of every single opportunity? No. But, it is to say that you would become someone that is faithful and trustworthy as a steward of God's manifold grace. It is to exemplify the life of faithfulness to the Lord. He is not just proving out his believing heart, he is to be exemplary. He is to leave his mark in that he lives in very faithful and trustworthy manner.

The final quality is “purity” or **hagneia** (ἀγνεία). It's that group for purity or holiness. This word is used in particular, most frequently than not, in the realm of sexual sin. In other words, we can translate this as “chastity.” Here when it talks about that idea, you may ask, “Why? Does Timothy have an issue with it?” I don't think so. Let's be careful. Timothy is a real person and we will meet him in heaven one day. I don't want to just accuse him of being like King David, who will forgive me for mentioning that but he was a man that had issues with sexual sin. With Timothy, I don't know.

So the idea here is that he is to be pure in the manner in which he approaches his normal life—in the manner in which he interacts with the people of the opposite sex and in particular, in areas of sexual sin or temptation. He is to be chaste in that. Have you ever asked yourself (it's a very important thing to ask) “Why is God so concerned about sexual sin?” There's a lot that Scripture says about sexual sin.

If you would ask the world and the society which you live in today, I think the vast majority of the unbelieving world would tell you today, “Everyone should stop being so prudish. Just grow up. Our sexuality is part of us being human. Let us just experience that with each other and let us just minimize the pain with each other and go on.” That's the attitude of the world.

Why is God so concerned about that? This is my guess at it. Because there is nothing that is easily corruptible, perverted, or twisted than the issues that deal with love, romance, and your heart. Isn't that true? You take a spiritual man and you

take a spiritual woman, you put them in a relationship and man, there is hair-pulling and all kinds of craziness that comes out because when love is involved, all of a sudden, *then* you know each other.

Those of you guys who are married couples, you are sitting next to that spouse that God has blessed you with and the blessing of that spouse is that that person knows probably your sin greater than anyone else ever except the Lord, Himself. We know each other's sins. We know each other's bad parts. So when you take all of that and you corrupt that, to share that kind of intimacy wherever you like it, then you no longer have the sense of what God has created such things to be.

When it comes to your heart, when it comes to love, when it comes to passion, romance, whatever you want to call it, those things are so easily corrupted to the point of all kinds of tragedies, pains and compromise. He is saying: "Timothy, you are a young guy, but if you want to make an impact, show love. Not just show it, but do it. Show faithfulness. Be trustworthy to people and to the living God and live a life of purity."

In all of these categories, what's curious is that if you study through the Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy, Titus) you find out that the false teachers that Paul is addressing, lack all of those. They don't really walk in love. They have a false motive. They are not faithful, not to the Scriptures and to God that they are proclaiming to be worshiping. They are taking all the byways and the sidetracks. They are not keeping it straight and narrow. And purity, it says that they take advantage of these young widows. Apparently, they go into their homes and take advantage of them. The idea, the intonation of that suggests that maybe there was something inappropriate in their conduct of that. So, Timothy is to be the opposite of all that. He is to leave his mark in doing the things that are befitting the proper character and minister of God.

Let's look at verses 13 and 14. If the first part is to make a difference in people's lives, the second part is then to utilize God's provision. In other words, the emphasis here is not about your strength, but about the strength that God supplies.

How to be an Excellent Minister—Word of God & Spiritual Gifts (vv. 13-14)

"Until I come, give attention to the *public reading of Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching. Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery."

So the first part is to proclaim the Word of God and there is our first provision from God that we are to give attention to (and the command is to give attention to) that public reading of Scripture; to that exhortation, to that teaching.

The reason why I say "to that," "to that," and "to that" is because the article itself is used three times. It suggests that whoever is reading this letter will know that there is actually a time of Scripture reading in the corporate gathering, there is a time of exhortation, and there is time of instruction. These are the natural things that happen in a course of the worship service.

He is saying, "Give attention to the Word of God concerning your preaching." And that's the concept here. It's the idea that Timothy is to minister, but to give his attention first and foremost to the word of God: the reading of Scripture, the exhortation from Scripture, the teaching that comes from the Word of God.

We do that in our Sunday morning service. We might do it a little bit differently than they might have done it there, I don't know. It's not to say that that's all there is to the worship service. There ought to be a sense where we look at the Word of God, we read it, we exhort from it, we discuss what these things say, and we teach from it; we follow up by way of application and instruction. There is the proclaiming in the reading, there is the explanation, and the exhortation, and there is understanding that comes by way of instruction. It's a three-pronged attack to implement God's word for our lives. It's a beautiful thing.

The idea is that Timothy is to give careful attention to that. He says "Timothy, don't stray from that which is most important." The Word of God is what will motivate, what will properly change and make a difference in people's lives. Not you, but God's Word.

Don't you love the metaphors that the Word of God has? We know that it is a lamp unto our feet, light unto our path. Hebrews 4:12 says that it is a "*double-edged sword*." Why the double-edged thing? Because it doesn't matter which way it goes. It'll cut you up! One seminary professor liked to say that we can even translate that idea to that of a scalpel, a sharp scalpel that will let you make the sharp incision, to do the special surgery, to correct the issues of the heart. That's what the Word of God is. And Timothy is to give careful attention to that but not just to the Word of God but also to his gift.

"Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery."

Timothy is endowed with "**the spiritual gift**," that spiritual giftedness (to our best guess) would be something to the effect of preaching or teaching or maybe leadership in the church. It is never expressly stated exactly what Timothy's giftedness is but Paul commands in 2 Timothy 4:2 that you are to "*preach in season and out of season*" as if that is something that he is particularly good at. So whatever that spiritual gift was, it says that it was bestowed alongside or with the prophetic utterance.

It is an interesting thing because at first reading, you might think, "Well, a bunch of elders gathered around (that's what the term "**presbytery**" means: "the elders") and they put hands on Timothy and they are like, "Lord, what gift should we grant him? Let's grant him exhortation and preaching and teaching. Let's pray. Lord, give him teaching!" and he gets this power. That's kind of what we envisioned in our minds but it is nothing close to that. In fact, it is more explicit in Scripture the prayer or the prophetic utterance does not itself grant anything.

The spiritual gift is granted by the Holy Spirit (that's why it's called a spiritual gift) and it is given to Timothy for the sake of the church. And it is given to Timothy and it was known by "**prophetic utterance**." In other words, the elders were testimony to God's gifting of this young man to exhortation, to teaching, to be able to correct errors in the church. That's what he was made for. That's what God had designed him for. God had given him an ability to do that.

And it's not so much that he was neglecting that, but I think Paul is saying "Don't forget. Don't neglect it by way of trying to do your own thing. Timothy, I know you're smart, but being smart is not enough. I know you are energetic, but your energy is not enough. You need to use your giftedness. You have the gifts given to you by God to complete the task that God has given to you."

Paul often reminds Timothy of his commissioning that the elders had laid hands upon him. And "**the laying of hands**" upon him is nothing more than that. It is commissioning him. It is these guys putting on their hands and saying, we commission you to services. They did that for Paul and Barnabas. They do that a number of times in the book of Acts to different individuals for Stephen as well as other deacons that are mentioned there. It is a common thing and that's what happened. They had laid on their hands and by prophetic utterance, the Holy Spirit has gifted this man to be able to exhort, teach, and correct error. He is gifted to that and he knows that.

Paul is reminding him, encouraging him, making him be able to go and do that and the key is accompanied by prophecy not bestowed by him. The gift of prophecy didn't bestow that gift. In fact, nowhere in Scripture do you find that you are to pray for certain particular gift. "Lord, I would like the gift of mercy. Lord, make me merciful please!" We are not to seek such things out.

God in his Holy Spirit provides to us what is needful for the church in which we minister. It was commissioning by the laying on of hands and what he is saying is do not neglect that which God has given you as your main means of ministry. It's the Word of God as well as your giftedness unto God's glory.

If we are to be vigilant in what are to do with our lives to be good ministers, we are to make a difference in life, we are to utilize God's provision and finally we are to guard the journey. It's kind of a strange way of saying we are to be vigilant in being careful about the manner in which we are to live in all of our lives, not just in the things of public ministry.

How to be a Good Minister—Spiritual Growth (v. 15)

"Take pains with these things; be *absorbed* in them, so that your progress may be evident to all."

When it talks about the urgency of things, it says to "**take pains**" or *meletao* (μελετάω). It means "to study" or "to practice." Here, I think the idea is to practice. In other words, have such a diligence or practice that it hurts. That's why many of our English translations use the words "**take pains**." It means to be so enraptured in it, so careful about the way we live, that it's the kind of due diligence that is almost painful.

You know the whole concept of "no pain, no gain." That's true. Have you ever worked out or done anything physical? There is pain involved, but that results in stronger muscles. It results in greater ability. In that same way we are to live our lives with such painstaking care that we increase, we become better, we become more useful. In fact, to double it up, he says to "**Take pains with these things; be *absorbed* in them.**"

Notice, the term "***absorbed***" is in italics (in the NAS). There is no word there; it is a command to be absorbed or sucked up or something weird like that. The command is "be" or "become." He is saying to become them. Take such diligence in yourself and in your teaching that you become the very thing that you are studying: the person of Christ and his Word. Become like it, become in it.

"Being absorbed in it" is probably an excellent translation there. He says, "**so that your progress may be evident to all.**" As we grow and mature, that growth and maturity should be on public display. How do we combat uselessness? Be the person we are supposed to be! Advance ourselves. Display the advancement and maturity of the things of Christ concerning ourselves.

Sometimes you hear young guys being really concerned. You say, "Hey would you do this for the church?" And they will go, "I need to ask myself if that's right or if my motive is right concerning that." I understand where they are coming from and we need to be careful about pride; but the privilege to be able to serve and to minister, that is the privilege we need to take up gladly. Again, not for ourselves but for the glory of the Lord.

There are a couple things I want you to understand as far as God's program and our part in it. No one of us individually is absolutely necessary to God's program. You guys understand that right? Remember Jesus in the triumphal entry in [Luke 19](#)? He is coming in and people are shouting "*Hosanna blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*" They are

basically citing a Messianic psalm and saying clearly that this is the Messiah. John 12 tells us because they had seen what had happened with Lazarus being raised from the dead, people went to Bethany (Bethany is just a little ways from outside of Jerusalem) and said "You are Lazarus? Tell me, were you really dead? Yeah, I was really dead." People were acknowledging that this must be the Messiah. Look at all the stuff he can do!

So they are coming out into the streets, throwing palm leaves and they are celebrating and as He walks in, the Pharisees say, "You should tell your disciples to be careful not to blaspheme. What are they talking about? You should tell them to be silent." You know what He says to them in Luke 19:40? He says, "*I tell you, if these become silent, the stones would cry out.*"

If we take the Word seriously, what He is saying is individually, you can shut them all up. Then the trees and the stones, the creation will start to cry out about me. We have that sense in which individually I am not necessary to God's program of glory. Neither are you, neither is anyone in particular in this room. And yet, we personally are sought after.

That great passage in 2 Chronicles 16:9 says: "*For the eyes of the Lord moves to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.*" Remember earlier in 1 Timothy 1:15, it says: "*It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners* (And we said that Paul should have stopped there but he goes on to make it personal) *among whom I am the foremost of all.*"

Paul goes on to say why it is so important that he was personally saved by Jesus Christ in 1 Timothy 1:16 which says, "*Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who believe in Him for eternal life.*"

On the one hand, Paul is trying to convince us that we are not so important to wonder about whether or not we should be doing this or that because the stones themselves will cry out glory to the Lord. Yet on the other, why is it so important that God saved you? That God saved me? Because Paul said, "*This is a trustworthy statement... Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.*"

Why did He grant such mercy? So that I might minister to you. There is a purpose in it. The question is not whether our efforts will be good enough because they can never be good enough. The more important question, the more significant question, is whether our service is so that we might display the glory of God's grace in our lives. So we might minister to others and they say, "God is a good God. Look at how he has gifted that fool of a man so that he might proclaim the Word of God to us."

How to be a Good Minister—Pay Attention to Yourself & Ministry & Persevere (v. 16)

"Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."

Ask yourself: are you an example to those who believe? Are you a living billboard of God's gracious character? Do you walk in a manner that people look at you and think, that's what a humble man should be? That's what a gracious lady should be. That's what a God fearing man of God or woman of Christ, that's what we should be like. Are you that? And if you're not, then ask yourself why not? And beg upon the mercies to be used of God for purpose. Not just to make your way through this life but to actually be used of God, to make a difference. Beg Him to do that with your life and maybe by His grace He'll do that.

He says "**pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching**" or doctrine, what you believe, what you preach, what you tell to others, what you know about the Word of God. Are you careful about knowing about what the Word of God has to say? Are you both? It is an examination of both that makes us excellent ministers. And he says, "**persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.**"

Some people will get upset and uptight anytime the Scriptures call us to persevere unto salvation. The Scripture calls us to that all the time. The reason is because it is talking about that final salvation of us going to the Lord. The Scriptures are clear that it is always perseverance unto the very end that finds salvation waiting for us there. Is God sovereign in that? Absolutely. He is the one that gives us perseverance.

Jeremiah 32:40 says, "*I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.*" God is the One that places the fear of God in our hearts so that we will not turn away from Him. Philippians 1:6 says, "*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*"

Concluding Remarks

When we take all of this in (verses 11 through 16), what we see is that we are to make an impact, make a difference in life. We do that with God's Word and with whatever giftedness God has given to us. And we diligently and carefully guard our way. Make sure that our lifestyle and our doctrine is always what it needs to be. That will make us effective ministers.

I am not talking about preachers and pastors. Every pastor and preacher needs to know that passage of Scripture obviously. We are talking about normal lay people like the majority of you. What would you do with your life? How should you live your life to the glory of the Lord to make the most impact? That should be your heart's desire.

We'll all appear one day. We'll all be gathered around the Great City. I still think about it; I think we should always think about it: 1400 x 1400 miles... like I said, it's a city. A third or half of the country is about that size, about the size of California and Nevada put together. We're talking about all livable space. No mountains in the way, no forests.

Can you imagine the glory of that day? But the glory of that day will be increased with one thought. That until that day comes, you and I, we can invest in that. We can do things unto His glory here.

Why do you have this life? Why not just save you and take you home? There are many who God does do that to: to the thief next to our Lord, Jesus said "*This day you will be with me in paradise.*"

Why has the Lord graciously given us so many years of believing life? So that we might make an impact. We might make a difference and we might minister. Seek to do ministry that is only unique to you; that the Lord would be glad to give to you, entrust to you, to see you do. Let's close our time in prayer.

Heavenly Father,

We thank You even as we celebrate just this time of thankfulness and giving praise to You for all your goodness Lord.

We thank You not just for the things that we have and the friends that are dear to us and the family that we love, but instead Lord, even beyond that, we thank You for giving us the ability, a chance for us to live to Your glory in this life.

Lord help us, if there is in us a desire to be used unto Your glory Lord, let our hearts cry that out to You. Would You not answer such a cry? Would You not desire to give to us a chance to invest into eternal things and to make a difference, to make consequential matters for eternity?

I just pray that each one of us would be able to examine ourselves and think carefully so we might be used for Your glory. Let us not live for ourselves. Let us live for You. And if each of us thinks in such a manner Lord, what a delight this family of God would be.

What a delight this church would be. Not just to ourselves and all that would be present but to Him who deserves all glory, to Jesus Christ, to Him crucified and raised and exalted on high. We give You the praise and ask that You would instruct us and keep us in Your care.

*In Jesus name,
Amen.*