

## The sermon

### Intro

What are pastors to be and do? What should you want in a pastor? What makes a good pastor? Some of those answers are found in today's passage.

### READ PASSAGE

### Body

#### Passage Focus

Four points on pastors. What's the responsibility of each elder in this church? What does this mean for you?

#### Point 1: Pastors command a response (4:11, 13)

*Command and teach these things.* – 4:11

Pastors issue commands. I can't teach the Bible without exercising authority. Because the Bible is filled with commands.

Timothy wasn't technically a pastor. He was an apostolic delegate sent by Paul to clean up the Ephesian church. But he functioned like a pastor.

*"these things"* (4:11) = *Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness;* – 4:7

Timothy would exhort the people to reject *"irreverent, silly myths."* Stop believing them. Stop talking about them. Stop wasting your time on them. That's prohibitions. Don't do this. Pastors tell people how not to live.

And *"train yourself for godliness."* That's a positive command. Do this. Pastors tell people how to live.

*Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.* – 4:13

Timothy, this is what you do when the church gathers.

The idea is a pastor reads a passage of Scripture. I say a passage of Scripture because they didn't read the whole Bible every time they gathered. They explain the meaning of that passage (teaching). And they encourage the people to respond to that passage (exhortation). Believe these things. Don't believe these things. Do these things. Don't do these things.

#### Application: what a pastor commands and what a pastor doesn't command

Where do we draw the line? What does a pastor command? What does a pastor not command?

The pastor says this is what the passage says you need to believe. This how you obey this passage. I never suggest belief or obedience is optional.

But the pastor doesn't preach manmade rules and traditions. Doesn't preach personal preferences. Doesn't preach the values of political party or a civic organization. Doesn't preach the doctrines of men. Pastors preach the Bible.

#### Entertainment

Recently I've been asked about entertainment. I struggle to give a concrete answer. I'm a bit of a nut. I generally avoid immodest dress, cursing, and sexual humor. I have a filtering device that takes out that stuff. If the movie had nudity, I wouldn't watch it even with a filtering device. I have personal standards based on lust warnings and the idea that I shouldn't enjoy sin.

I get the inconsistency. If I watch a Patriots game I'll see cheerleaders in immodest dress. Where do you draw the line?

Kevin DeYoung asks the question, “can I thank God for this?” Other reasonable questions include, “is this desensitizing me to sin? Is this causing me to sin?”

I have no problem saying don’t watch movies with nudity. But I’m uncomfortable providing you with a list of approved and unapproved movies. I’ll give you a few principles and let you figure it out for yourself.

### **Vacation**

I’m not going to tell you where you’re allowed to go on vacation, how long you’re allowed to go on vacation, or how much you’re allowed to spend on vacation. I’ll leave that to you to figure out.

### **Summary**

**Pastors command a response.** We tell you what the Bible says. We bind your conscience to Scripture. But we don’t preach manmade rules, personal preference, etc.

### **Point 2: Pastors teach the Bible (4:13, 16)**

*Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.* – 4:13

When the church gathers, Timothy must read passages of Scripture, exhort/encourage the people to obey those passages, and teach those passages.

So what is teaching?

### **Teaching**

Here teaching means the act of teaching.

To teach means to instruct people from the Scripture that’s been read. To help you understand what the passage means (what should I believe?). The basics and the deeper truths.

That’s why I attempt to go word for word, or at least phrase by phrase. It’s Scripture I’m helping you to learn. Not personal preference or personal opinion or the world’s “wisdom” or the doctrines of men or manmade rules.

The teaching Paul’s talking about is teaching that occurs when the whole church gathers together. The Sunday morning service. But Sunday school, small groups, etc. is similar.

Teaching is distinct from reading Scripture. Ralph doesn’t stand up and read eight chapters of Isaiah and then say we’re dismissed. Reading must be accompanied with teaching and exhortation.

Teaching is explaining the Bible. Exhortation is encouraging obedient response to the Bible.

*Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.* – 4:16

Teaching is critical because teaching “*will save both [myself] and [my] hearers.*”

Salvation meaning spiritual salvation. Past salvation (forgiveness of sins), present salvation (spiritual progress = sanctification), and future salvation (a glorified body that can’t die or sin). Paul doesn’t think Timothy needs his sins forgiven. So Paul’s talking about spiritual progress = sanctification. As Timothy sticks to the Scriptures, his teaching will help others make spiritual progress.

Meaning if he's sloppy in his preaching his hearers will suffer for it. Some teachers are better for your spiritual progress than others. Some teachers keep a better watch than others. It's warning me not to be sloppy.

### **Illustration**

When I was taught evangelize because you're unfaithful if you don't, the idea was evangelize so you won't feel guilty.

But I came across a healthier spirituality. Evangelize because you believe in hell. Evangelize because you love sinners. Evangelize because the gospel is powerful. Evangelize because you want to see God worshipped. That's evangelize from faith and love, not from guilt.

One model emphasized guilt and shame. Another model emphasized faith and love. What I'm saying is some "Christian" spiritualities are better for your progress.

### **How is salvation dependent on my teaching?**

If a pastor diverts from the Scriptures for doctrines of demons his hearers won't be saved.

So teaching can't be treated casually! The stakes are high! I need to watch what I'm teaching. Is it Bible or something else? Am I helping or hindering my hearers?

Now I don't save people. God does. But God saves through his word. God saves sinners through faithful teachers. God sanctifies Christians through faithful teachers.

### **So what is preaching?**

Reading Scripture. Explaining what it means. Helping you to see what it means. Exhorting you to put it into practice. Helping you to connect truth to life.

Good preaching is accurate, balanced (it brings every angle of Scripture into the discussion; doesn't dodge "hard" passages), understandable, helpful (it connects truth to life), stirs the affections (reaches the heart), and God-centered (it aims to see God glorified and treasured and feared and for God's people to be confident in him).

### **Thoughts**

Some of you want basic. You don't want a treatise on propitiation. Some of you want deep. You want a treatise on propitiation. In a group like this we have people at different places. Different needs. Different preferences. How do I process this?

I think my goal should be to be as deep as Scripture. Anything covered in 1 Timothy is fair game. 1 Timothy was for common people, not PhD students. It was read aloud because it could be understood.

I want to be understandable. You might have learning disabilities. You might not get every last detail. At the very least, I want to highlight some big ideas everyone can come away with.

I want you to be familiar with the basics. I want you to know the big words. I want you to be able to spot lies. I want you to have discernment to evaluate TV preachers and Christian books.

I want you to have a biblical spirituality. A Christian life shaped by Scripture. Not superstition, manmade rules, etc.

My goal is to be accurate, understandable, to connect truth to life, and for your confidence in God to swell.

Talk to me. Give me some respectful feedback.

## Salvation

Maybe you're considering Christianity. The Bible says we need to be saved. Saved from the punishment our sins deserve. Saved from the sinful nature we're born with. Do you feel broken? Do you feel enslaved? Do you feel guilt for your sins? The good news is for you.

God saves sinners through his Son Jesus. Sinners like you, sinners like me. Jesus died on the cross for sinners. So that whoever believes would experience forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Only Jesus can take away the punishment we deserve. Jesus' death takes away your punishment if you believe.

Believe you're a sinner. Believe God forgives those who believe. Confess your sins to God. Ask God for his forgiveness on the basis of Jesus' death. Trust God forgives those who turn to him.

Tell me, tell someone here if you do believe. And we'll help you follow Jesus.

## Point 3: Pastors model godliness (4:12, 15-16)

*Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.* – 4:12

Pastors devote themselves to teaching. And to personal godliness.

Some say Timothy was late 30's. Others say a little shy of 30. What's clear is he was younger than some of the people he was teaching and he was being disrespected because of his age. Age discrimination! I've been saved for 60 years. What can I learn from a 30 year old boy? His children aren't even teenagers. What can he teach me about parenting? [The Bible doesn't say Timothy was married and had children.] You get the idea.

How should Timothy counter the negative opinions? By his conduct. Do you have co-workers who look down on you? Live a godly life. Do you have family members who look down on you? Live a godly life.

*"in speech"* = telling the truth, speaking the truth in love, refraining from perverse humor, refraining from angry, hurtful words.

*"in conduct"* = our behavior, our manner of life.

Note these five elements of godliness are interconnected.

*"If you love me, you will keep my commandments.* – **John 14:15**

Love for God fuels conduct.

*"in love"* = love for God and love for neighbor. Commitment, affection, action.

*"in faith"* = living by faith. Acting from confidence in God.

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.* – **Galatians 5:6**

What Paul's saying here is faith is at work when love is happening. Love is fueled by faith. **Faith is the fuel the drives the human heart.** [faith → love → obedience]

One way we love God is with our mouths. One way we live by faith is trusting what the Proverbs say about the tongue and putting that teaching into practice. Faith drives love. Faith drives conduct.

Another way we exercise faith and love God is through purity.

“*in purity*” = thoughts and behavior. Motives and actions. Sexual purity’s included. Looking at a woman with lustful intent is committing adultery in our heart (Matt 5:28). How do I kill lust? Believe what God says about lust. And love God by obeying what he says. Faith at work producing love kills lust!

A pastor doesn’t just tell others how to live. A pastor places his own life under the authority of Scripture.

***Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.*** – 4:15

“*these things*” = the pastor’s teaching and the pastor’s conduct, the five characteristics.

Pastors don’t just devote themselves to teaching. Pastors devote themselves to godliness.

***Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.*** – 4:16

Keep a careful eye on my conduct and what I’m teaching you. Self-examination. Measure my conduct against the Bible. Measure my teaching against the Bible.

Persist means continue. As I continue in sound living and sound teaching I will positively impact you. If my doctrine goes awry I’ll lead you away from Jesus. If my conduct goes awry I’ll be teaching you to be casual about sin. Doctrine is critical. Practice is critical. I must keep a watch on both.

### **Application**

Before teaching a passage I need to bring myself before the Lord in prayer. Has my heart been warmed by this truth? Do I believe it? Do I love it? Am I obeying it? Teachers, we need to be careful it’s not just head information!

Does this truth mean something to me? Is it shaping my life? The Scripture need to change pastors too. Good devotional questions for each of us.

### **Point 4: Pastors make progress (4:14-15)**

***Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.***  
– 4:14

There’s disagreement about the relation to prophecy and laying on of hands. Was the gift imparted by prophecy or laying on of hands? Was the gift recognized by prophecy and the laying on of hands? The matter’s too complex and confusing to discuss here.

The basic idea is Timothy has a spiritual gift (pastor, teaching) that the local church publicly recognized. So Timothy’s responsible to be a good steward of this gift and to make progress in it. Spiritual gifts can be hindered by laziness.

If a person is make progress in their teaching gift, they must have opportunity to use that gift in the local church.

***Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.*** – 4:15

You should see progress in my teaching. You should also see progress in my conduct. This assumes we have regular contact with each other. Which assumes consistent attendance. How else could you note any progress?

## **Progress**

Over time my understanding of the Scriptures should improve. Pastors are just like you. We don't know everything. I know a lot about the Bible and I want you to be confident that I'm not guessing or making it up as I go or treating the Bible casually. But there's things we don't understand about the Bible. There's things we don't know that we don't know.

Over time my ability to teach should improve. In accuracy. Being understandable. Helping you to connect truth to life. Encouraging you to be confident in God.

Over time my character should improve. Meaning pastors are not fully formed. Yes, pastors can legitimately meet the elder character requirements. But pastors, like you, possess remnants of the sinful nature. Pastors, like you, have to do battle with the world, the flesh, and devil. Pastors, like you, have particular sins and weaknesses they're more susceptible to. Pastors, like you, have to confess sin and repent. Pastors, like you, have room to grow in their faith.

I'm a saint, sinner, and sufferer just like you.

## **Application**

Progress means you should be willing to bear with someone who is making progress (me and Dennis and Gerald and Ralph). You should hold us accountable to be improving. You should encourage us when you see progress.

We exist to instruct you in the faith. We exist to model a life of faith for you. Learn from us. Pray for us. Minister to us. We're here to do the Christian life with you.