

Sermon outline and notes © Dr. Stephen Felker, Pastor Emeritus  
Swift Creek Baptist Church (swiftcreekbaptistchurch.com)  
18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834  
Sunday, November 17, 2024

## 1 Timothy 4:6-16 “The Profile of a Good Pastor”

Intro. In v.6 of our text the apostle Paul tells Timothy how he can “be a good minister<sup>1</sup> of Jesus Christ...” So I want to ask you to think about the question, “How would *you* define a good minister?” Your Pastor Search Committee is looking for a long-term pastor and they certainly need to know how to answer that question. Yet if I were to ask 3 different Baptists that question, I would probably get 3 different answers! Some would say that a good minister preaches 25 minutes or less. Others would say a good minister spends most of his time visiting in the hospitals, nursing homes, the homebound, and so forth. But I believe we would do well to obtain our definition of a good minister, not from tradition or personal preference, but from the Word of God. And you should do so for several reasons. First, that you may pray for the ministers you know according to God’s will. Pray that we will be the kind of pastors that follow the biblical pattern. Secondly, before you complain about or even commend a pastor’s ministry, you should make sure that your expectations are in line with the Word of God. Finally, at some point you will be asked to evaluate and vote on a candidate for pastor. I hope through this message to prepare you for this important responsibility.

So let’s look into the Word of God and see Paul’s definition of a good minister of Jesus Christ. What we have here does not include all aspects of pastoral ministry, but I do believe it covers most of what a good pastor is to be and do. First of all:

### I. A GOOD PASTOR TEACHES THE WORD OF GOD

This is one of the priorities of the pastor according to Acts 6:4<sup>2</sup> and 1 Timothy 3:2<sup>3</sup>. Now notice what Paul says in v.6, “If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ...” Paul warned of false teaching in vv.1-3. Now he encourages Timothy to instruct or place before<sup>4</sup> God’s people the *correct* doctrines of the faith. Then in v.13 we have the 3 elements in the ministry of the Word, the public reading of the Scriptures, exhortation based on that reading, appealing for faith and obedience, and then<sup>5</sup> also teaching, explaining the meaning of Scripture. Notice that these are things a minister should “give attention” (*prosecho*, v.13a) to or be devoted to.

Now in order to teach the Word of God:

A. A Pastor Must Study and Learn the Word of God – In v.13 Paul says, “Till I come,

---

<sup>1</sup> The Greek word here does not have the technical meaning which we give today to the word “minister.” Here, the idea is that of a servant (*deaconos*), without any official meaning. Every Christian should be a servant of Jesus Christ.

<sup>2</sup> In Acts 6:4 the apostles said, “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

<sup>3</sup> A pastor must be “able to teach.” See also 1 Tim. 5:17.

<sup>4</sup> Translated from *hupotithemi*, literally “to place under,” it is only used twice in the New Testament, yet according to Robertson, is an “old and common verb.” It can mean “to suggest” even though good doctrines should not be considered just suggestions, as is clear from v.11. Perhaps “point out” (HCSB) is a better translation.

<sup>5</sup> Probably Paul does not mean that the exhortation should precede the instruction, but that the instruction should be given first. Exhortation needs teaching as a basis.

give attention to reading....” Granted, v.13 probably refers to the public reading of God’s Word, which would primarily be the reading of the Old Testament, but also some apostolic letters that were circulating by then. The Church carried on this synagogue practice. In the early church, very few individuals owned private copies of the sacred writings. After all, they had to be copied by hand, and the type paper they used was pretty expensive.

However, Timothy or other pastors would have access to copies of Scripture, and Paul could well have been encouraging Timothy to do his own private reading and study of God’s Word also. In v.6 Paul wrote that Timothy should be “nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine....” Now look over to 2 Timothy 4:13, “Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments.” Clearly, Paul was a man who studied the Word of God and other related material. A minister, of all people, should be faithful in daily Bible reading, as well as additional study of God’s Word in preparation for teaching and preaching. No man can give out without taking in. He who would teach must be continually learning.

Furthermore, look at v.15 of our text, “Meditate on these things....” We are not only to read God’s Word, but we are also to meditate<sup>6</sup> upon it as we prepare to preach or teach a text of Scripture. Starting on Monday morning I began to read and meditate on the Scripture that I will be preaching the following Sunday.

I believe that a minister needs to spend at least 15 hours/week studying and preparing to preach and teach. I’m confident that I spend that many hours preparing for my Sunday and Wednesday messages, though I always want to study and prepare even more. In Thom Rainer’s book, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*,<sup>7</sup> he says that in a comparison study between effective pastors and ineffective pastors, the average *effective* pastor spends 22 hours/week in sermon preparation, and the average *ineffective* pastor spends just 4 hours/week in sermon preparation. A minister can do many good things, but he must give priority to the personal study and preparation from the Word of God.

A minister was called away unexpectedly by the illness of a close family member. He entrusted his new assistant with filling the pulpit. The Pastor’s wife stayed home. When he returned, the minister asked his wife what she thought of the young man’s sermon. She said, “It was the poorest I’ve ever heard. There was nothing in it, nothing at all. It didn’t even make sense. It was very unorganized. I was disappointed.”

Later that day, the concerned minister met his assistant and asked him, “How’d the Sunday service and sermon go? Did all go well?” “All went very well, sir, absolutely wonderful,” he said. “I didn’t have time to prepare a new sermon of my own on such short notice, so I got on your computer and pulled up one of your old sermons from last year.”<sup>8</sup>

So Search Committee, I suggest that you ask candidates how many hours per week they spend or would spend preparing their two weekly messages.

B. A Pastor Must *Teach* the Word of God – The Bible can be a difficult book to understand, and therefore it has to be explained. So there are at least 4 references to teaching in this text of Scripture. In addition to v.6, Paul said in v.11, “These things command<sup>9</sup> and teach.” To teach is to explain the text; to command tells the people to carry it into effect. Then in v.13

---

<sup>6</sup> The word “meditate” (*meletao*) was used by the Greeks of the meditative pondering.

<sup>7</sup> Thom Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 184.

<sup>8</sup> From Pastor Tim’s CleanLaugh List.

<sup>9</sup> Paul sets an example. This text is full of imperatives!

Paul says, “Till I come, give attention to ...doctrine.” Here the word translated “doctrine” (*didaskalia*) literally means “teaching.” But here it takes on the meaning of the *content* of good teaching. A good minister will instruct the people in the sound doctrines of the Christian faith, which is the diet of his own soul. Likewise in v.16 Paul says, “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine” or “teaching.”

And what is it that a good minister must teach? He must teach the *Word of God*. Christians do not gather to hear the opinions of a preacher; they gather to hear the Word of God. Furthermore, a good preacher must not teach worldly doctrines or false doctrine; instead, he should utterly reject them and refute them. Paul says in v.7, “But reject profane and old wives’ fables.” “Profane” (*bebelos*) refers to what is common, what lacks a divine or sacred character. It describes fables that are worldly and have no true Christian value. They are the opposite of “the words of faith...” (v.6). In 2 Pet. 1:16 Peter referred to “cunningly devised fables” which he and others refused to follow. The fictions of the Jewish teachers (1:7; cf. Titus 1:14) and Gnostics<sup>10</sup>, are called myths (*muthoi*) or “fables”. There can be no compromise with these. They must be rejected (*paraiteomai* suggests a strong refusal). The profane myths which the apostle tells Timothy to shun would include the “endless myths and genealogies” mentioned back in 1:4. In 2 Tim. 4:4 Paul warned of a day when “they will turn [their] ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” People love to hear stories and so it is not surprising that one religious technique is to frame religious beliefs in the form of myths and stories.

We must continue to reject any manifestation of myths in our day. The book of Mormon contains many mythical stories. The *Da Vinci Code* claims to be based on fact, but it is a modern manifestation of a myth, pure fiction. I’m convinced that evolution will eventually be proven to be a colossal myth.

There are pastors today who make heavy use of stories, not to illustrate biblical truth, but as content for preaching. Or instead of preaching God’s Word they preach psychology or politics or the latest fads in worldly thinking, cloaked in religious talk. Instead, we are to focus on preaching and teaching the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ and other teachings of the Word of God. We should be like the apostle Paul and preach “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).

C. A Good Pastor Must *Preach* the Word of God – There is a difference between teaching and preaching and the difference should be more than volume! Good preaching must include teaching, but it adds exhortation and other elements, as we see from v.13. Also, Paul says in 6:2, “Teach and exhort these things.” Also, if you look over to 2 Timothy 4:1-2 Paul wrote, “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead .... Preach the word! .... Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” Good preaching will also use God’s Word to comfort and give hope those who are hurting. Good preaching will warn of the consequences of not giving heed to God’s Word. So a good pastor teaches and preaches the Word of God. Secondly:

## II. A GOOD PASTOR LIVES THE WORD OF GOD

A pastor can be a great preacher or teacher, but if he is not practicing what he preaches, he is undermining his ministry. Notice what Paul says in v.16. He says, “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine (teaching).” He previously said something similar to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit

---

<sup>10</sup> Especially concerning the emanations and orders of the eons.

has made you overseers....” Not only should a pastor watch out for false doctrine, but also keep a close eye on how he is living his life. A good pastor is not only a teacher of the Word but also a *doer* of the Word.

Now with that in mind, notice what a pastor, and really all of us, should do:

A. Make Godly Living a Priority - This is expressed in the last of v.7, “...exercise yourself toward godliness.” The word “exercise” (*gumnazo*) is from a word in Greek from which we get our English word “gymnasium.” Just as an athlete trains himself physically, even so a Christian should *work* at developing their godliness. This means we should do our part to secure our spiritual growth, which is mentioned in the last of v.15. It means taking discipleship seriously and devoting *effort* to it, especially in regard to prayer, the study of God’s Word and doing good works.

Effort, striving, and dedication is also indicated by Paul’s words in v.10, “For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach....” The word rendered “labor” (*kopiaio*) suggests strenuous toil, even to the point of exhaustion. Instead of “suffer reproach” (*oneidizometha*), better manuscripts (C rating) support an athletic term (*agonizometha*) which accords better with the context. Paul is using an analogy to engaging in a strenuous athletic competition. Both words denote strenuous effort. A good minister must be self-disciplined and expend effort to achieve a life of godliness. We also must watch out<sup>11</sup> for temptation and set boundaries to protect ourselves from temptation.

Next consider:

B. Be an Example of Godly Living – In v.12 Paul says, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”<sup>12</sup> He is to be a living embodiment of what he teaches.

Now in v.12 Paul is dealing with another aspect of Timothy’s ministry in the early church. Since he was young, Timothy would have to earn the respect of the older members of the church. So Paul wrote, “Let no one despise your youth.” That is actually a 3<sup>rd</sup> person imperative, which means that he is commanding others not to despise Timothy’s youth. Paul knew that there would be many who would watch him with a critical eye. It sometimes goes against the grain for older people to be instructed by younger. They had served under the leadership of a veteran missionary like the apostle Paul, so it is by no means inconceivable that some would look with disfavor and contempt on the younger Timothy. The verb is a present imperative with a prohibition, forbidding the *continuance* of an action already going on. Timothy *was* being despised by at least some. So Paul is making it clear that it is wrong to look down on someone just because they are younger than you.

I remember having a problem with that in the earlier days of my ministry. Yet in Christianity, authority is contingent upon character far more than age. I became the lead pastor of a small church a little before my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and certainly by the time I was 30, I was both experienced and mature in spite of my young age. By the way, Timothy was probably in his 30s at this time. Yet, he would have been considered young for the position that he held. So if you are able to get a young pastor, be sure to remember this command as you relate to him. Don’t

---

<sup>11</sup> To “take heed to yourself” means “to give attention to” or “observe.” This can include watching out for temptation. He asking you to confirm your curtain time permit optimal neither this responding to my response

<sup>12</sup> Due to time, I should probably focus only on the aspect of v.12 dealing with being an example. I could preach a separate message especially for youth.

look down on him just because he is young.

Now in regard to being respected, Timothy had a responsibility. He should certainly not give anyone good *cause* to look down on him. Instead, he is to gain respect by setting a good example. He said in v.12, “be<sup>13</sup> an example<sup>14</sup> to the believers....” He was to excel in those very qualities in which youth are usually deficient. When you set an example, you are giving people a pattern to follow. Your life should be a living illustration of what you are teaching. In fact, your lifestyle may be your most powerful message. Likewise, in Phil. 4:9 he wrote, “Those things which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do.” Paul personally knew the importance of setting a good example.<sup>15</sup>

You can be sure that if you are a leader in the church, people are watching you. People inside the church are watching you. And furthermore, people outside the church are watching you. So we must set a good example.

Parents of youth and children, I hope you will also keep this in mind at all times. How you live will have a greater impact upon your children than the moral lectures that you may give to them when they get into trouble!

So what are some of the important areas of life that should be good examples for others? Look at what Paul says in the last of v.12:

1. In Speech - In Matthew 12:34 Jesus says, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” So whatever comes out of the mouth reveals what is in a person’s heart. So our speech is a very important part of a Christian’s life and example. This has reference to personal conversation, not just preaching or teaching. Eph. 4:25-26, 29 tells us what our speech *should* be like. It should be truthful (v.25; Col. 3:9a), gracious (v.26; Col. 4:6), and pure. In fact, v.29 says, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth” (cf. Col. 3:8b). How is *your* speech? If you are a leader of this church, do you set a proper example in your speech?

2. In Conduct - Conduct or behavior is a wider term and includes everything which comes under moral scrutiny. The apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:15, “but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.” Then in 2:12 he wrote, “having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that ... they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.” Are you exemplary in *your* conduct?

3. In Love - Jesus said in John 13:35, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Paul has in mind a love which impels the one loving to sacrifice himself for the benefit of the person loved. He is to always seek to promote the welfare of others and meet needs. This kind of love is unconditional and is a matter of the will. So one mark of a good pastor is that he shows love by caring for others, and is willing to help others.

4. In Faith - A good minister must manifest a strong faith in God, holding fast to the truths and promises of God’s Word.<sup>16</sup>

5. In Purity - He should live a pure life. This certainly includes sexual purity. In 2 Tim. 5:2 he told Timothy that he is to relate to “older women as mothers, younger as sisters, with

---

<sup>13</sup> The word “be” is not the ordinary verb of being in the Greek, but “to become” (*ginomai*). Paul is saying, “keep on becoming.”

<sup>14</sup> “Example” is from *tupos*, “a figure formed by a blow or impression,” thus a “model, image, or pattern.” A dressmaker will lay a pattern on top of material and cut the material to match the pattern.

<sup>15</sup> Paul also wrote in 1 Cor. 4:16, “I urge you, imitate me.” He also told them, “Be followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (11:1).

<sup>16</sup> The Greek word translated “faith” could be translated, “faithfulness,” though few translations translated that way. It does not have the definite article. We should serve Christ with unwavering consistency and loyalty.

all purity.”

Another aspect of godly living is to:

C. Grow in Godly Living – In v.15 Paul says, “Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.” You never reach a point in this life when you reach perfection. Pastors, especially, should keep growing spiritually year after year. We are not to become stagnant in our relationship with Jesus Christ. I believe that a pastor will be most effective to the degree that he continues to grow in his own spiritual walk with the Lord.

Can people see that you are still making spiritual progress in your Christian walk?

### III. A GOOD PASTOR CULTIVATES HIS SPIRITUAL GIFT(S)

A pastor is not to serve the Lord primarily through his own strengths and abilities. His ministry is to be a work of the Holy Spirit. And so Paul says in v.14, “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.” Instead, he should use the “gift” that the Holy Spirit had given him on a regular basis. The word refers here to a special inward endowment which qualified Timothy for teaching and exhortation, and which was directly imparted by the Holy Spirit (Vincent).

Although the “gift” (*charisma*) was imparted by Holy Spirit, the exhortation not to neglect it brings out the human responsibility. Spiritual gifts do not work mechanically or passively. God’s gifts, like a talent, must never be left unused. The Greek seems to indicate that Timothy was *not* making full use of his spiritual gift.<sup>17</sup> So he should heed Paul’s exhortation in 2 Tim. 1:6, “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you....” Paul is using an analogy of stoking a fire that is going out, which causes it to burn more brightly.

Paul reminds Timothy of what transpired to identify his gift and calling. Prophetic intimations were given to Paul as to the selection of Timothy for the ministerial office. These prophecies were given by the Holy Spirit who also bestowed the gift. The laying on of hands speaks of identification. Here it was the outward act and ceremony symbolizing the fact that Timothy was now to be identified with the elders in the common work of the ministry of the Word. The word “eldership” was used of the elders of the local assemblies, those church officials charged with the responsibility of supervising the spiritual welfare of the local assembly.

Now different pastors have different spiritual gifts. All should have the gift of teaching or preaching, for Paul says in 3:2 that a pastor *must* be “able to teach.” But pastors usually have one or more additional gifts. Some are also gifted in leadership. Some are also gifted in administration. Some are also gifted in being especially merciful toward the hurting. Some are also gifted in evangelism. Timothy may have had the gift of discernment in regard to false doctrine. A church is better off in recognizing what their pastor’s gifts are, and letting him focus on the exercise of the gifts that *God* has given him. Others in the church should come forward to exercise those gifts that are lacking in a pastor’s life, including a staff member that is gifted and what the pastor lacks.

So a pastor should cultivate and exercise his spiritual gifts because those are the areas of ministry in which he is most effective and has the greatest impact. Furthermore, the same is true of each of you. You should discover your spiritual gift and find a ministry in the church through which we can exercise that gift. Do you have a spiritual gift from God that you are currently

---

<sup>17</sup> The word “neglect” is in the present imperative, which when used in a prohibition, forbids the continuance of an act already going on.

neglecting to use (v.14)?

Finally:

#### IV. A GOOD PASTOR PERSEVERES

Paul says in v.16, “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them...” “Continue” is from *epimeno*, to persevere, remain, continue. He doesn’t get led astray into false doctrine. He stays true to the Word of God, true to his mission, and true to his calling. A good pastor doesn’t quit.

Then Paul gives a reason why we should persevere in the last of v.16, “for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” That statement is difficult to interpret with any certainty. Perhaps Paul means that in following out the previous advice, he will not only be working out his own salvation (in the sense of Phil. 2:12), but will also be assisting others to do the same. Or the salvation referred to here is to be understood in the context (vv. 1-3) to refer to being saved from the teachings of false teachers. Timothy and his hearers will be saved from becoming entangled in these heresies.<sup>18</sup> The bottom line is that what we do or fail to do not only impacts us but also those that we minister to. God is the Savior of the world (v.10), but He entrusts us with the responsibility and privilege of being instruments of salvation (v.16) by teaching and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. So one of the primary responsibilities of a pastor is to point people to the Savior.

Conclusion: So a good minister teaches and preaches the Word of God. He lives according to the Word of God. He is careful to utilize his spiritual gifts. Finally, a good pastor perseveres in sound doctrine and practice. Pray that God will grant you such a pastor. If the pastor you call falls a little short of these ideals, pray for his growth in ministry.

Sources: William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series: The Letters to Timothy, Titus, & Philemon* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975); Stephen Felker, *Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible* (Col. Hghts, VA: Published by Author), 2024; Donald Guthrie, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: 1-II Timothy, Titus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957); John MacArthur, Jr., *Qualities of an Excellent Servant: Study Notes on 1 Timothy 4* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1987); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible [Ver. 5:80]* (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2021); Donald A. Ward, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (Waco: Word Books, 1974); Kenneth S. Wuest’s *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament: The Pastoral Epistles* in Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

#### ABOUT THESE SERMON NOTES

© Dr. Stephen Felker. These notes may be used and even shared for personal study or ministry, but not for commercial purposes. The author credits the sources listed above and footnotes for much of the content. The “live” recording of this sermon will be more completely in the author’s own words. To obtain an audio or video recording of this message, go to [www.sermonaudio.com/pastorFelker](http://www.sermonaudio.com/pastorFelker). Dr. Felker’s email address is [S+Felker&2@aol.com](mailto:S+Felker&2@aol.com) (remove signs).

---

<sup>18</sup> In His goodness God often saves even unbelievers from starvation and harm (Job 7:20; Acts 17:28).