

Introduction

Recently a young man wanted to know the difference between reading his Bible in his quiet time and studying the Bible. There is a difference between reading and studying, a big difference. When we are reading our Bibles in our quiet times, we are not looking up the meanings of all the words, trying to come up with an outline for the passage. In our quiet times we are feeding our souls with God's word. We are filling our hearts and minds with God's word. We are looking at God's attributes and His character. We are looking to see how God may be revealing Himself to us, or giving us some instructions for our lives. We are trying to listen to God and how He may be speaking to us.

When we are studying a passage in the Bible, we are making observations of the passage, and then seeing how all these parts fit together. We are trying to find the main idea of the passage and what the passage is saying about the main idea. We are coming up with an outline of the passage. We are looking at the meaning of words, and how these words are used elsewhere in Scripture. We are looking at the context of the passage, and the context of the passage in the whole of Scripture. We are looking at possible applications for our lives and the lives of others.

The next question the man asked me was if he should have a quiet time some mornings and then use that time to study on other days. I counseled him to keep all his quiet times, and then carve out some additional time to study the Bible.

In our passage today, Paul exhorts Timothy in verse thirteen to give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, and to teaching. Reading gives us an awareness of Scripture, while teaching gives us a deeper understanding of Scripture. We study a passage so that we have a good understanding of it, and once we have an understanding, we can teach others. Exhortation is an encouragement and prod of others to apply the Word of God in their lives. We need to read and be aware of Scripture. We need to gain understanding of Scripture. Finally, we must apply Scripture in our lives. The young man that asked me about the difference in reading and studying had asked a great question, and I was happy to help him understand the difference.

Our passage today is a great example of the difference between reading and studying. When you read the passage, it appears that Paul is giving lots of unrelated thoughts. He talks about pointing out false doctrine, and not having anything to do with worldly fables. He talks about bodily discipline and discipline unto godliness. Then, he talks about prescribing and teaching things. Next, he tells Timothy to show himself as an example in his speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. Then, he tells Timothy to give attention to the public reading of Scripture, exhortation, and teaching. He tells him not to neglect the Spiritual gift within him. He tells him to take pains with these things and to pay close attention to himself, and to persevere. These look like twelve unrelated exhortations to Timothy. However, after careful examination and study, I realized that these are not just miscellaneous things that Paul was sharing. The passage is about the life of a good servant of God. These twelve exhortations are about the life and ministry of a good servant of Christ, and the outcome of doing all these things. These things applied to Timothy, but more importantly, they apply to all of us, because we all want to be good servants of God.

The Life and Ministry of a Good Servant of Christ

1. Life
2. Ministry
3. Outcome

(1 Ti 4:6–16) “In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, *constantly* nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. {7} But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; {8} for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come. {9} It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. {10} For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers. {11} Prescribe and teach these things. {12} 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. {13} Until I come, give attention to the *public* reading of *Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching. {14} Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. {15} Take pains with these things; be *absorbed* in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. {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.”

1. Ministry

In 1 Timothy 3, Paul gave the qualifications for a pastor. Someone aspiring to the office of overseer needs to be above reproach in his character, family life, and with the community outside the church. He also needs to have the ability to manage the affairs of the church and to teach the word of God. The list of things in 1 Timothy 4 are similar, but this is an additional list with some priorities of a servant of God. This list is for servants of God, and it is how they can be good servants of God. These are things that every minister needs to keep before him throughout his ministry.

Paul begins by talking about the ministry of a good servant by saying, “in pointing out these things to the brethren...” Paul has been writing about false doctrine that can cause some to fall away from the faith. These harmful doctrines are given by deceitful spirits and they are doctrines of demons. God does not want any of us to fall away, and so He reveals these things to us to protect us. A good servant of God is going to point these things out to the brethren. A good servant is going to try to protect the flock from false teaching, and ultimately, from falling away.

(1 Ti 4:6) “In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, *constantly* nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.”

A pastor needs to have his spiritual antennas up all the time. At a fellowship lunch I was with a couple that was visiting our church. As we talked, I discerned that they were part of a cult, known as the Way. The early church was called the Way, but this cult had taken the name, but they are not believers. They do not believe in the trinity. They do not believe in the deity of Christ or the Holy Spirit. After some probing questions, I discovered that their mission was to spread their false doctrine among our congregation. I told them they were welcome to come and learn, but they were not going to be allowed to share their doctrine in our church. They did not attend any more of our services. I used the incident to point these things out to the brethren.

I have had to stop false teachers from spreading false doctrine about the deity of Christ, the authority of the Scriptures, the use of the Law, the gospel, and many other things. This passage reminds me to keep my antennas up and to point these things out to the brethren.

The second thing is to prescribe and teach sound doctrine. In verse eleven, he wrote, “Prescribe and teach these things.” He tells Timothy three times in this letter to prescribe and teach these things: 1 Ti 4:11, 5:1, and 6:2. He wrote that when a servant of God points out false doctrine, he is constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine they are following. Ministers have a responsibility to point out false doctrine and to prescribe and teach sound doctrine.

(1 Ti 4:11) “Prescribe and teach these things.”

What are some of the examples that Paul gives? He had just written about those teaching people to abstain from foods. The sound doctrine was that God has created food to be gratefully shared in. Food is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude. Food is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.

(1 Ti 4:3–4) “*men* who forbid marriage *and advocate* abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. {4} For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude;”

I believe that we are free to eat all foods, but I do not believe that all foods have the same nutritional value. We are free to eat processed foods, but it is not the healthiest. It is far better to eat fresh fruits and vegetables. I believe that grilled or baked foods are healthier for you than deep-fried foods. I believe natural sugars, like honey or maple syrup, are better for you than high fructose corn syrup, so we should be careful and look at the ingredients of foods. So, while we are free to eat all foods, I believe it is wise to watch your diet.

Paul also shared about being nourished on words of the faith. A good servant of God is going to teach on things that are going to build the faith of the brethren. He is going to teach things that give more understanding about the kingdom of God and how it operates. He is going to teach on things that will help people grow in their faith, like reading and studying the word, and making prayer a priority in their lives.

The third thing Paul exhorted Timothy to do was to give attention to the public reading of Scripture, exhortation, and teaching. In those days, printing presses were not in use and people did not have their own copies of the Old Testament. The New Testament had not been canonized, and people did not have copies of the letters that Paul, Luke, Mark, Matthew, John, James, Jude, and Peter had written. They did not have cell phones with Bible apps to read their Bibles. The primary way for the brethren to be exposed to the word of God was by the public reading of the Scriptures. This was an extremely important point that Paul was sharing.

(1 Ti 4:13) “Until I come, give attention to the *public reading of Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching.”

Since we have hard copies of the Bible, and Bible apps on our computers and phones, we have a distinct advantage over the brethren in the early church. The issue now is not the availability of the Bible, but the desire and commitment to read the Bible. Barna’s survey in February 2024 showed that 94% of church members are Biblically illiterate. We need to change that statistic by encouraging believers to read and study their Bibles. A good servant of Christ Jesus is going to encourage and exhort the brethren to read their Bibles, and may even give them a reading plan. We have a number of reading plans on our church website, under “Connection Tools.”

The Apostle John wrote in Revelation 1:3, “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy...” We are blessed by reading the word of God.

(Re 1:3) “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.”

If you do a search of the word, “read”, in the Bible, you will find that it is used seventy (70) times. God commanded Moses to read the Law to His people, which He did. After Moses died and Joshua was leading the nation, we find that he also read the word of God to the people. In Joshua 8:35 we read, “There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them. God wants all of us to read and hear the word of God. Generally, I read a passage out loud before I dive into it and begin to teach it. I take serious the charge to read aloud the Scriptures.

(Jos 8:35) “There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them.”

God also commanded the Jews to read the law at their feasts. They were to assemble the people, the men and the women and the children and the alien and read to them so that they could hear and learn and fear the Lord.

(Dt 31:10–13) “Then Moses commanded them, saying, “At the end of *every* seven years, at the time of the year of remission of debts, at the Feast of Booths, {11} when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing. {12} “Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the Lord your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law. {13} “Their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.”

We find an example of that in Nehemiah 8:8. Israel had gathered for the Feast of Tabernacles, also known as the Feast of Booths. All the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses and to read it. He read from the law from early morning to midday. He stood on a wooden podium which had been made for that purpose and he read out loud for hours. The podium helped with visuals and acoustics, but it also shows that this was intentional and planned.

(Ne 8:1–8) “And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had given to Israel. {2} Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who *could* listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. {3} He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law. {4} Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose... {8} They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.”

When Israel went from being a theocracy to having a king, God instructed the kings to write for themselves a copy of the law, and to read it all the days of their lives, so that they could learn to fear the Lord and to carefully observe all the laws and statutes.

(Dt 17:18–20) “Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. {19} “It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, {20} that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.”

Paul exhorts servants of God to read the Scriptures and also to exhort people. To exhort means to encourage and prod people. God wants us to be doers of the word, not merely hearers of the word. James wrote, “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.” A good servant of God is going to encourage people to make application of what they are hearing.

(1 Ti 4:13) “Until I come, give attention to the *public reading of Scripture*, to **exhortation** and teaching.”

(Jas 1:22) “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”

When I was a young believer, the Holy Spirit spoke to me from Ezra 7:10. “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.” God told me that this was to be my life. I was to study the word of God, practice it, and to teach it. Another way of looking at this is I was to prepare, practice, and preach. At that time, I had no interest in teaching and did not know anything about teaching, but God knew what He had created me to do. This was God’s plan for my life. Before we teach others, we need to be applying the word in our own lives. We have more understanding and lots of examples to share with others when we have practiced it ourselves. A good servant of God is going to exhort people to apply God’s word in their lives.

(Ezr 7:10) “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice *it*, and to teach *His* statutes and ordinances in Israel.”

The third thing that Paul exhorted Timothy to give attention to was the teaching of God’s word. Recently, an apostle told me that many of the pastors in churches today do not have time to study, and they are using AI to prepare their sermons. I was greatly saddened, and I replied to him that it was not a matter of time but priority. Those pastors who are doing that have chosen to use their time in other ways, not in studying and preparing their messages. It takes time, and the early apostles knew this.

(1 Ti 4:13) “Until I come, give attention to the *public reading of Scripture*, to exhortation and **teaching**.”

In Acts 6, when a complaint arose about serving the Hellenistic widows, the apostles told the congregation to choose seven men who they could put in charge of that task. Then, they said, “But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” The apostles prioritized

the ministry of the word, which means they prioritized, set aside, and guarded the time they needed to study and prepare messages to feed the flock. The study of God's word is not a seminary class or classes, but a lifelong dedication to studying. A good servant of Christ Jesus will prioritize and give attention to teaching God's word.

(Ac 6:3-4) "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. {4} "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

The fourth thing concerning the ministry of a good servant was to use their spiritual gifts. Paul wrote, "Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery." The presbytery means the elder team. Church leadership was always a plurality of elders, not a one-man show. There was a team leader, but it was a team, not an autocratic government. When someone was ordained into office in the church, such as pastor or deacon, the presbytery would lay hands on the person.

(1 Ti 4:14) "Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery."

The laying on of hands did three things: identification, confirmation, and impartation. In the Old Testament, when a man presented a sin offering, he laid hands on the goat or bull, and he was identifying his sin with the animal to be sacrificed. That offering was on his behalf. When a judge was settling a matter, he laid hands on both parties. The judge was identifying with both parties, and it showed he had authority to represent both of them. When the presbytery laid hands on a person, it showed that he was now being identified in that office.

Secondly, the laying hands on someone was a confirmation that this man was called by God, and that it was God's will for him to be set into that office. It was a confirmation that the presbytery were in agreement that this man was called and met the qualifications for the office.

Third, the laying on of hands was an impartation of power, authority, blessing, or gifting. Jesus laid hands on the children to impart a blessing to them. Jesus also laid hands on the sick and healed them.

(Mk 10:16) "And He took them in His arms and *began* blessing them, laying His hands on them."

(Luke 4:40) "And while the sun was setting, all who had any sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on every one of them, He was healing them."

The presbytery laid hands on leaders and imparted the authority and weight of responsibility for caring for the flock. In this passage, the presbytery had laid hands on Timothy and imparted a spiritual gift. Paul does not specify what that gift was, and scholars have differing opinions as to what that gift was. Since Timothy is identified as an apostle in 1 Thessalonians 2:6, I believe he was ordained into apostolic ministry. He may have received a gift of teaching or evangelism, as Paul encourages him in both of those areas. Either of these gifts would have greatly helped him fulfill his calling as an apostle.

2. Life

The first area that Paul touched on was the ministry of a servant of God. The second area that he addresses is the life of a good servant of Christ, and he begins with discipline. A good servant of Christ is going to be a disciplined person. His life needs to be characterized as a disciplined person. Paul wrote, “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things.” There is some profit in bodily discipline, but only a little. When we think of bodily discipline, we usually think of exercise and eating habits. A servant of God should be disciplined in these things, but that is not where Paul places the emphasis. The emphasis is on discipline for the purpose of godliness. The disciplines that come to mind are prayer, fasting, reading of God’s word, and study of God’s word. God’s servants need to be devoted to prayer and the ministry of the word, just as the apostles were in Acts 6.

(1 Ti 4:7–8) “But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; {8} for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come.”

I have found that people who are disciplined, are usually disciplined in all areas. A man that is disciplined in going to bed on time, getting up on time, being careful of what he eats and how much he eats, and exercising every day is generally going to be disciplined in praying, reading the Bible, and other spiritual disciplines.

The next part of a servant’s life is he is to be an example to the flock. Paul wrote, “Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example to those who believe.

(1 Ti 4:12) “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.”

The Greek word for example is *tupos* (Strong’s G5179), which literally means a die that is struck. It leaves an imprint in whatever material it is struck in. God’s servants are like dies, and they are to leave the impression of Christ on everyone they touch. *Tupos* is also translated as a pattern. When Moses built the tabernacle, he used a pattern that God gave to him. When my wife used to sew her own clothes, she would find a pattern for a dress that she liked, and then pin that pattern to a material she had picked out, and then cut out the material. Then, she would sew the pieces of material together and finish making the dress. The life of a good servant of God is like that pattern. People should be able to use their lives as a pattern to make their own lives look more Christ-like.

God’s servants are to be examples to the flock in all areas of their life. They are to be examples in their speech. They are not to be gossips or double-tongued, or use foul language. They are to use their tongues to bless and encourage others. Their conduct or the way they live their lives is to be an example. They are to be examples of love. I think that many people in the body of Christ do not understand God’s love, which is why Paul prayed in Ephesians 3 for people to know and comprehend the love of God. It is why he carefully defined the character of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. In addition to teaching about love, leaders need to model God’s love to the flock. When the church sees good examples of love, it will be easier for them to understand God’s love. God’s leaders are also to be examples of faith and purity.

There is a huge problem in the church regarding purity. Statistically, seventy percent of the church struggles with pornography. There are many kinds of other forms of immorality in the church. Unfortunately, church leaders have not been examples to the flock in this area. If we are going to be good servants of Christ, we must be examples to the flock in all areas of our lives.

The third area of a good leader's life is being diligent. Good servants of Christ are conscientious about their faith and life. Paul wrote that they are to take pains with these things, be absorbed in them, so that their progress is evident to all. They are to pay close attention to their lives and to their teaching. The verbs that are used, "do not neglect, take pains, be absorbed, and pay close attention," all speak of someone who is diligent and conscientious about his faith.

(1 Ti 4:15–16) "Take pains with these things; be *absorbed* in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. {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."

I like to garden, and I want to draw a parallel to gardening. When you plant a flower, bush, or tree, the roots are not established. You cannot neglect it, because it does not have the root structure established to endure much. You must give attention, pay close attention, take pains, and not neglect it, or it will wither and die. Once the plant is established, it still needs to be regularly watered, but it does not require your full attention. Our ministries are like a new plant. We have to give attention to our ministries. We have to be absorbed in them. We cannot neglect them. We must pay close attention to our lives and ministries. God wants us to remain, continue, and to persevere in ministry, and if we are not diligent, we may not persevere in dry and difficult conditions.

Consider the following statistics from surveys in a Hartford report done in the fall of 2023. According to the report, seventy-two percent (72%) of churches in the US reported disagreements or conflicts in the body. "That conflict impacts pastors...Ninety-one percent (91%) of pastors who think about leaving pastoral ministry 'fairly often' or 'very often' serve in churches reporting conflict."¹ Dry, difficult growing conditions affect those in ministry. Pastors must not neglect their ministry. They must give attention, close attention to their lives and ministries so that they can remain, continue, and persevere in these conditions.

Conflict is not the only difficult condition those in ministry deal with. "Ninety percent (90%) of pastors report working 55-75 hours per week. They feel overworked. Seventy percent (70%) of pastors feel grossly underpaid. Ninety percent (90%) feel they are inadequately trained to cope with the ministry demands and ninety percent (90%) of pastors said the ministry was completely different than what they thought it would be like before they began. Eighty percent (80%) believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families. Seventy percent (70%) do not have someone they consider a close friend."² These difficult conditions in the ministry mean that the servants of Christ must pay very close attention to themselves, their wives, their children, their relationship with God, and their ministries or they will not be able to persevere and finish the ministry.

Notice how Paul ends his letter to the church in Colosse. "Say to Archippus, 'Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.'" We do not know what

¹ <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2024/04/pastor-leave-church-conflict-hartford-church-health-survey/>

² <https://gregatkinson.com/why-do-so-many-pastors-leave-the-ministry/>

Archippus was going through, but I don't think the challenges of ministry are much different today. He probably felt overworked, underpaid, lonely, discouraged, inadequate, and many other things. Paul's exhortation was for him to take heed to the ministry so he could fulfill it. God's servants must take heed, give attention, not neglect, pay close attention to their lives and to their ministry so that they can continue, persevere, and fulfill it.

(Col 4:17–18) “Say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.” {18} I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.”

3. Outcome

Paul also shared some positive things that those good servants of God can hold on to. First, he said when they point out false doctrine and teach sound doctrine, they will be constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine they are following. I try to put good meals on the table every Sunday. I study and work hard at preparing messages. I want our flock to be well fed and nourished. While our flock may greatly benefit from the messages that I have prepared, I am constantly being nourished by the word of God in the process.

(1 Ti 4:6) “In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, *constantly* nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.”

Second, Paul spoke about the benefit from discipline. He said that bodily discipline is of little profit. I exercise regularly and when I have my check-ups at the doctor, they cannot believe what they see. My pulse is generally between forty-two (42) and fifty (50). My blood pressure is usually around 112/80. These are benefits from a disciplined diet and exercise program. These are the little benefits. The greater benefit is that disciplining ourselves for the purpose of godliness hold promise in this present life and the life to come. I pray daily for many people, and I see answers to many of these prayers. There is great joy in seeing answers to prayer. There is great joy in seeing lives changed, and to see people walking in truth. But discipline for the purpose of godliness holds promise for the life to come. We may not see all the rewards now, but according to God's word, there are rewards for the life to come.

(1 Ti 4:7–8) “But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; {8} for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come.”

The third encouragement for good servants of God is that they will ensure salvation for themselves and for those who hear them. These are eternal rewards. The most important decision that anyone on earth can make is to follow Christ. This is a decision with eternal consequences. When a minister warns the flock about false doctrine and teaches them sound doctrine, he is helping people stay on the path of life.

(1 Ti 4:16) “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.”

When I had to shut down the church I had been planting in Acworth, I felt discouraged about the results of all the work that I had put in. I felt that all the seeds that I had sown were to no avail.

But the Lord encouraged me about my work. He said the church is people, and what I had sown into people would never be lost. I had been an example to people in my speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. I had given attention to the reading of Scripture, exhortation, and to teaching. I had spent lots of time praying and fasting. I had shared the gospel and led many people to Christ. I had taken pains with these things, and paid close attention to my teaching. There was fruit that was going to last forever, and it was not lost. I had labored and striven, and fixed my hope on the living God, the Savior of all men, and there was profit in the life to come. In 1 Corinthians 15:58 Paul exhorted us to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, because our toil is not in vain in the Lord. My work had not been in vain.

(1 Co 15:58) “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in* vain in the Lord.”

Conclusion and Applications

All of us are called to serve the Lord. Not all of us are called to be pastors, but all of us are called to serve. These exhortations and promises are true for all of us. God wants us to be on guard for false doctrine, and to expose it when we see it. God wants all of us to be nourished on words of faith and sound doctrine. God wants all of us to discipline ourselves to godliness.

God wants all of us to fix our hope on the living God, the Savior of all men. God wants all of us to be an example to others in our speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. God wants all of us to read the Scriptures, to exhort others, and to teach one another. God has given each of us a spiritual gift, and we are not to neglect it. God wants us to stir up the gift inside of us, and to use what He has given us to further the kingdom of God. God wants all of us to pay close attention to our lives and to our ministries.

What has God been speaking to you about this morning? Has He been speaking to you about spiritual disciplines? Has He been speaking to you about spending more time in His word? Has He been speaking to you about being an example to others? Is there a specific area in your life where the pattern needs to be adjusted so that others will be able to use your life as a pattern for their lives? God wants you to take pains with your life and ministry. God wants you to pay close attention to your life and ministry so that your progress is evident to all. Take a minute and write down the things that the Lord has shown you this morning.

Closing Prayer

Father God, we come to You in the name of Jesus. Thank You for Your love for us. Thank You for all Your promises and encouragement. Lord, we want to be fruitful and effective servants; we want to be good servants of Christ. Help us to be examples to others in our speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. Help us to give attention to the reading of Scripture this year. Renew our minds and transform our lives so that we are examples to others. Help us to take heed to our lives and ministries so that we can be good servants. We pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- What are some of the requisites to being able to point out false doctrine and teach sound doctrine? (See Titus 1:9, 2 Timothy 2:24-26, and Galatians 6:1-3.)

- What does it mean to discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness? What are some areas of disciplining ourselves for the purpose of godliness?
- In 1 Timothy 2:1-2, Paul said that prayer needed to be a priority in church. In 1 Timothy 4:13, he urges Timothy to give attention to the public reading of scripture, exhortation, and teaching. How do these fit in with Acts 2:42? How do these fit in with the church today?
- If God's servants are not examples in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, what impact does it have on those in the church, and outside the church? When God's servants are good examples, what impact does it have on others?
- How do we neglect our spiritual gift? How can we give attention to our spiritual gift?
- Do most people know their spiritual gift? Have most people developed their spiritual gift?
- What are some keys to persevering in the things that God has called us to do?

The Life and Ministry of a Good Servant of Christ

Introduction (1 Ti 4:6–16)

- 1. Ministry** (1 Ti 4:6, 11, 4:3-4, 4:13, Re 1:3, Jos 8:35, Dt 31:10–13, Ne 8:1–8, Dt 17:18–20, Jas 1:22, Ezr 7:10, Ac 6:3-4, 1 Ti 4:14, Lk 4:40, Mt 10:16)

- 2. Life** (1 Ti 4:7–8, 12, 15-16, Eph 3:19, 1 Co 13:4-7, Col 4:17–18)

- 3. Outcome** (1 Ti 4:6-8, 16, 1 Co 15:58)

Conclusion and Applications