

1 Timothy 6:11-16 — What Is A Good Pastor?

June 25, 2017

Welcome to the CrossWinds Spirit Lake Campus. This summer we have a special campus-wide emphasis called, “Don’t just attend church, BE the church.” Why do we have this emphasis? In our studies of 1 Timothy, we learned that church is not just a place you attend, it is a family where you belong. It is a place where people genuinely care about you. If you are a visitor, I hope you feel a warm welcome from the CrossWinds family this morning.

There are 10 actions steps in our summer emphasis. I promised I would remind you of at least one of them every week. This morning I am reminding you about the fourth one, which is perfect for all the social media junkies. When you meet someone new at church, make sure you also friend him or her on your social media accounts. Don’t just welcome people into the church family but welcome them into your social media family as well. That is a practical way to use another opportunity to love people.

This morning, we are in our next-to-last message in the book of 1 Timothy. Next week, Paul will give some final words to Timothy on wealth, which will be very practical. Today, Paul gives his final words to Timothy on what it means for him to be a good pastor.

Before we get into the text, we need to understand the scene. The apostle Paul began the church in the city of Ephesus. It was his baby. After he left, he sent Timothy to pastor that church in his place. Ephesus was the fourth largest city in the Roman empire. The church in the city was huge. It had thousands of people. Timothy was young and inexperienced. He was only in his early 30s. He

was following in Paul's footsteps, and Paul left some big shoes to fill. While Timothy was young and inexperienced, he was what the church of Ephesus needed. He knew his Bible. He grew up with a Christian mother and grandmother. For the last 14 years of his life, he was a traveling companion of the apostle Paul where he ate meals with him every day. He heard almost all of Paul's sermons, and they talked every day. Timothy received some of the best on-the-job training in the Bible that anyone could receive. Imagine talking theology with the apostle Paul every day for 14 years. That was Timothy. Timothy was the closest thing to a walking photocopy of the apostle Paul on the planet.

While Timothy and Paul were close theologically, their personalities were very different. Paul was bold and outspoken, at least in his letters. 2 Timothy 1:7 tells us Timothy was shy and reserved. That is where we get the word timid from in our language. It comes from Timothy, who was shy.

For a soft-spoken, shy pastor like Timothy, the church of Ephesus was not an easy job to hold. It was filled with people who were leaving the truth of Jesus Christ and making up their own version of the truth. They were distorting the gospel. There were health-wealth and prosperity preachers tugging at people's hearts. There was conflict in the church. Timothy had his hands full.

As we come to these final paragraphs, Paul was pouring out his heart to young pastor Timothy — a young man he loves like a son. He gave Timothy a pastoral pep talk, telling Timothy what it takes to be a good pastor, because Paul loved him.

Of course, this pastoral pep talk applied directly to Timothy. This pastoral pep talk also applies to all pastors today. It applies to pastors who are walking in Timothy's shoes in a new generation and different place. Don't drift, because to some degree, this pastoral pep talk applies to everyone in the church. What it took to be a good pastor in Timothy's day, is also what it takes to be a good leader of any part of the church today. It is what it takes to be a good AWANA leader, CWU or CWA teacher or a Life Group leader. What Paul told us it takes to be a good pastor, is not just for pastors but it is something each of us needs to know.

There are seven qualities of a good pastor these verses give. Here is the first one.

A good pastor speaks God's words.

There is an interesting title given to Timothy by Paul. As we read, we almost miss it.

But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. 1 Timothy 6:11 (ESV)

Paul called Timothy *a man of God*. That may not catch your eyes but that little phrase has a rich background. It first appears in Deuteronomy 33:1. It was used to describe Moses. Moses was the man who spoke God's words to God's people in the Exodus generation. Man of God was not just used to describe Moses, it was also used repeatedly throughout the Old Testament to describe the man God chose in a generation to speak the Word of God to the people of God. A man of God was used to describe Samuel the prophet. It was also used of Elijah, Elisha, David and a few others. To be a man of God is to fall into the

lineage of the Old Testament saints that were called by God and chosen by God to speak God's words to God's people in their generation and their place.

When it comes to the New Testament, the only person called *a man of God* is Timothy, by the apostle Paul. Paul told Timothy he was God's man chosen by God to speak God's Word in the city of Ephesus in his generation. This is a high calling.

The only other time the phrase *man of God* appears in the New Testament is in 2 Timothy where Paul told Timothy how he is to speak the words of God to the people of God. Unlike Moses and other Old Testament prophets, where God spoke to them directly, Timothy was to hear and speak God's words in a different way from the prophets of old.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that **the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.** 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV)

Paul told Timothy his job was to be the man of God by preaching the Word of God to his generation. He was to keep his finger in the text.

Incidentally, that is not just true of Timothy but it is true of every pastor in every other generation that followed in his footsteps. Pastors are to be modern-day men of God that are called to speak the Word of God from the Bible to the people of God in their time and their place.

Let's see what else a good pastor does.

A good pastor knows when to run.

But as for you, O man of God, **flee these things...** 1 Timothy 6:11 (ESV)

Now I know this it doesn't sound very masculine to say a good pastor is good at running away from things. While running sounds wimpy, at times it is wise.

What are the things that Timothy was to run from? They are in the preceding paragraph. We looked at them last week.

Run from people who love quarrels.

Avoid people that love to fight at church. Avoid people who crave quarrels. You see quarrelers not just in the ancient church but in the modern church. They always want to whine and complain about something. The problem is they now have the Internet so they are bloggers and Facebook posters. The way to recognize them is almost every post is about what is wrong with someone else's ministry and somebody else's church. They aren't building people up. They specialize in tearing brothers in Christ down. When you think of these people, you don't know what they stand for, but you know what they stand against. What makes it hard is some of the things they say are true. The problem is they are very critical and uncharitable. They really don't want their problems solved, because then they would have nothing to complain about. Run away from those kinds of people. For heaven's sake don't ever become one of those people!

Run from people that think ministry is about money.

Avoid people who think godliness is a means to financial gain, that is the healthy-wealth-prosperity preacher. The other day I was watching on [YouTube a pastor named David Taylor who was in court over tax evasion](#). It was one thing after another of over-the-top expenditures on buildings, money and clothing that

the government was grilling him about on the witness stand. My favorite part was when they asked him why he needed to spend thousands of dollars multiple times a year for new Louis Vuitton clothing. His answer was he needed new clothes because he sweat through the old ones. I kept thinking he just needed to live like the rest of the world and try a washing machine and some Spray 'n Wash. I know that is an extreme example but the point stands — the man thinks ministry is about money, that godliness is about great gain. Paul told Timothy to run from those kinds of people as fast as he could.

Watch out for the desire to be rich and famous. Remember that behind all heresy is greed. It is a desire for popularity. It is the desire to be the center of attention. Don't associate yourself with people that are in the ministry for the money. Last week Paul said that if we have Jesus, food, clothing and shelter then be content. If they persecuted Jesus for speaking the truth, expect they will persecute you for telling the truth. You don't follow Jesus to be rich. Jesus wasn't rich. He was crucified.

Paul said a good man of God runs from senseless quarrels, especially on the Internet. He runs from letting his ministry be about money or controlled by money. Preach the Word and be content with what God provides as your salary.

There are a few other things from which Paul said men of God should run.

Run from sexual temptation.

Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. 1 Corinthians 6:18 (ESV)

Never negotiate with sexual temptation. Never sit and think about sexual temptation. The book of James describes temptation like a lure to a fish. The

longer you can get a fish looking at a lure, the more likely it is to talk itself into biting it. In the same way, the longer you look at temptation or allow yourself to think about temptation, the more likely you are to give in to temptation. To prove that, all I need to do is put chocolate in front of you for about five minutes and you will give in. The reason you will give in to chocolate is because it is in front of you. The best way to avoid the temptation of chocolate is to not allow it in your house. A good pastor knows he needs to be a good runner. Men of God run from sexual temptations, just like Joseph did with Potiphar's wife. They run from all form of greed and quarrelers.

Runs from youthful lusts.

So flee youthful passions... 2 Timothy 2:22 (ESV)

The word for passions means intense cravings that leave you feeling you must have something because everybody else has it. When I was growing up girls just had to have designer jeans because everyone else in the school had them. Today all the kids want a fidget spinner simply because everyone else has one. There is nothing wrong with a fidget spinner, but the main reason teenagers want one is because all their friends have one. Paul said to run away from those things if you are a good pastor. Fleeing youthful passions means don't let your values and morality be determined by the group think process of your peers. A good pastor thinks for himself.

To be a good pastor you must be a good runner. To be a good runner is not wimpy. It is wise. It is wise to run from foolish controversies that don't built people up in Christ. It is wise to run from people driven and controlled by money where their doctrine is determined by dollars. A good pastor runs from sexual sin.

A good pastor runs from youthful passions. They don't just follow the group-think process of their peers but they have learned to think for themselves.

A good pastor knows what to pursue.

It isn't always about what we run from but it is also what we run to. Just so you know, whenever it comes to dealing with issues of sin in your life, you will not have victory over those sins simply by trying to run from them. You need to run to something else. You always need to replace a sinful pattern or a sinful temptation with something godly or over time you will fall right back into that temptation if you fail to fill the void in your life with something good.

For example, if you are struggling with drinking beer on Friday nights and getting hammered, don't just tell yourself you will no longer drink beer on Friday nights then sit home and stare at the wall saying, "I will not drink beer. I will not drink beer." That won't work. Replace your beer drinking time with something positive on Friday night. Serve in a soup kitchen. Hang out with Christian friends. Go bowling if you don't know what to do. Good pastors don't just run from sin, they run to right living.

Paul gave Timothy six things to run to. They are in three pairs of two.

But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. 1 Timothy 6:11 (ESV)

Run after righteousness and godliness.

What is righteousness and godliness? Righteousness means to do what is right in all our relationships, whether that is between us and God or between us and another human being. A good pastor is known for doing what is right with

other people even if it hurts to do the right things. Psalm 15 describes what a righteous man of God looks like.

O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right... Psalm 15:1 (ESV)

The person who does what is right is a righteous man. Now the Psalm gives a list of what righteousness looks like in daily life. Look how it describes a righteous man in verse 4.

...who swears to his own hurt and does not change. Psalm 15:1, 4b (ESV)

A good pastor is a man of his word that keeps his promises, even if it hurts. There was a pastor I was mentored under who used to say it this way. *It is always right to do what is right*. How do you become a righteous person? Start doing the right thing right now. Pursue being right in all of your relationships with other people. Do everything you can to make sure you treat people fairly, honestly and graciously. As the Bible says, as far as possible, live at peace with everyone.

Paul coupled pursuing righteousness with pursuing godliness. While righteousness focuses more on outside relationships, godliness focuses on the attitudes and motives of our hearts. Godliness is what we think about when we are alone in bed. Godliness is what we watch on television when nobody is home. Godliness is what we look at on the Internet. It is our web browser history put on display for everyone to see. Godliness is what we say about someone behind his or her back when we are in the comfort of our own homes.

Here is where they go together. Pursuing godliness on the inside is what leads to righteousness on the outside. The outside of our lives is just a reflection

of the inside. What we are in the unseen moments of our lives will eventually be revealed in the seen moments of our lives. There is no way to avoid it.

Run after faith and love.

Faith means trust in God. It is unwavering confidence in God's power, purpose, provision and plan. When things fall apart in life, a good pastor doesn't freak out but he has confidence God will work things out, because God always has a good plan and he has everything under control. When things seem to be falling apart, a good pastor goes back to stories of God's faithful provision in the Bible and looks at how God took care of Joseph, how God took care of Peter and Paul in what looked like hopeless circumstances. God can always rescue a life, and he can always bring glory through tragedy. If God's people in the past had to live by faith in hopeless circumstances, we know that many times we will face the same challenges. A good pastor holds on to that same faith knowing God is alive and is actively involved in our lives.

The problem is that if a good pastor becomes all about faith and confidence in tough circumstances, he can appear like a cold-hearted stoic if he says all the time, "Don't worry you lost your job. God has a good plan," or "Don't worry that your son died. I have faith that God has a good plan." While that is true, in those tough times people are hurting. A good pastor needs to balance his faith with love. Good pastors work hard at loving people. They weep with those who weep. They cry with those who cry. Even if you have faith in God's good plans and know God will work everything out for our good and his glory,

sometimes life really hurts. People need somebody that loves them and that will cry with them. A good pastor does that.

A good pastor runs after endurance and gentleness.

Steadfastness means you keep on keeping on no matter what trials you face. Sometimes we call steadfastness endurance. The Greek word literally means to remain under pressure. When I was a college wrestler — which you can tell was a long time ago — they used to put us in the push-up position and make us stay there for 10 or more minutes. After a while, grown men were reduced to tears. That is a good picture of what this word means. A good pastor will persevere in the trials of life and hold on even when they would love to throw in the towel. When ministry is filled with problems, late hours and an exhausting schedule where you feel like you are not making an inch of progress, you hang in there and endure.

The problem is that sometimes people with that kind of gritty never-say-die determination relate to other people with a gruff suck-it-up attitude. Paul said coupled with incredible endurance under pressure, a good pastor pursues gentleness.

This is the only time this particular Greek word is used in the New Testament. It means when life is falling apart and people are failing around you, a good pastor doesn't take his anger out on people. He remains gentle with people, even when his day was rough. A good pastor strives not to come home from church and take the frustrations of his day out on his wife, children and family pet.

A good pastor runs from sin but he runs after right relationships with God and man. They run after bold faith in God in the midst of difficulties but they also strive to love people. A good pastor endures lots of pain and pressure in ministry but doesn't take his frustrations about life out on the people around them. They are gentle.

A good pastor is a fighter.

Paul then told us what a pastor is willing to fight about.

Fight the good fight of the faith... 1 Timothy 6:12 (ESV)

For many of you, this is a completely new thought. You have never thought of pastors as fighters. A good pastor must be a good fighter. The Greek word for fight used in this passage is the word *agonizomai*. We get our English word agony from it. In Greek it was used in athletic and military competition to describe someone who would put forth the discipline, drive and determination needed to win no matter what the cost. It is a never-say-die attitude that is willing to do the hard work necessary to win. A good pastor needs to have that kind of a hard-core fighter attitude, like Rocky Balboa in the ring. A good pastor can't have a glass jaw. He needs a steel jaw.

The question is, "What are pastors supposed to fight like this over?" The book of Jude answers the question.

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Jude 3–4 (ESV)

In the modern church, just like the ancient church, there are people who creep into the church who introduce heresy or error. They will try to take God's people away from the faith of the apostles with a distorted and easier faith.

For example, this past week Pastor Stephen and I were talking about Rob Bell, a former pastor from Kalamazoo, Michigan, that began teaching nobody goes to hell. His big argument was, "How can God send people to eternal, conscious, never-ending punishment for only a few earthly sins?" The problem is the Bible says in multiple places the righteous go to eternal life and those apart from Christ go to eternal punishment (Daniel 12:1; Matthew 25:46). I didn't make up the eternality of hell. God did! The truth of the Bible is something a good pastor will fight for. How does a good pastor fight? A good pastor fights by quoting books, chapters and verses, not philosophers, scholars and bloggers.

When Paul described himself at the end of his life, he described himself as having fought the good fight. Paul fought for the truth of the gospel as delivered by Jesus throughout his life. We see that in all of his letters. At the end of his life Paul said,

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7 (ESV)

The faith of the apostles is trusted into the hands of pastors in every generation. In every generation there is a new group of people trying to pull Christians away from biblical faith and a new generation of pastors is raised up by God to contend for that faith once for all delivered to the saints.

A good pastor won't let go of Jesus.

...Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 1 Timothy 6:12 (ESV)

Paul said good pastors also take hold of the eternal life to which they were called. The word *take hold* is the same word used in the New Testament to describe what Jesus did when Peter was walking to him on the water and he began to sink. Jesus grabbed hold of him and did not let him go. This word is used to describe the kind of grip you have on a drowning man when you are saving his life. A good pastor holds onto his faith in Christ with that same kind of tenacity so it doesn't slip away. Specifically, good pastors will look back on their baptism, when they publicly proclaimed their trust in Christ as the only way to know God and be forgiven of their sins. They will hold onto that as tight as they can from beginning to end of their lives.

The reason Paul said this is because of what Jesus said in Matthew 13 in the parable of the soils. In this parable the Word of God — which creates spiritual life — is analogized to seed falling on different soils. Some seeds fell on rocky soil where it springs up but dies off in the heat of the day. Jesus said that is like people who become Christians but when there are trials or persecutions for following Christ, they fall away. Jesus also said in that parable that some seed fell among thorns and the thorns choked it out. This reminds us of people who receive the word of God with joy. They start off well, but the cares and pleasures of this world choke out their lives in Christ and they become unfruitful.

A good pastor doesn't let trials and the cares and pleasures of this world loosen their grip on Jesus so their lives prove unproductive for him. A good pastor holds onto Jesus like he is holding onto a drowning man.

A good pastor plans to finish well.

I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time. 1 Timothy 6:13–15 (ESV)

Paul said, "I charge you." That literally means, "I command you" to continue as a good pastor all the way until Christ returns. He said to Timothy, "As you pastor the church in Ephesus, remember who is watching your ministry — God the Father, who gives life to all things and Jesus Christ. They are watching you every day. When you are under pressure in the battle and you think it would be easier to bend, remember Jesus and his good confession. Jesus stuck to the truth even when it cost him his life." What was Paul talking about? He was talking about Jesus before Pilate when his life hung in the balance.

Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You have said so." Matthew 27:11 (ESV)

When Jesus was asked if he was the king of the Jews he kept the confession and didn't bend under pressure, even pressure of death. He entrusted himself into the hands of God the Father and did what he knew was right.

In the same way, a good pastor must remember that God the Father and the Son are both watching your ministry. When it is really hard to say the truth because you know it will cost, you stick to the Word of God and trust the result in

God's hands, just like Jesus spoke the truth and trusted what happened into the hands of his heavenly father.

How long does a good pastor stay focused on being faithful to Christ no matter what it costs him? Until the return of Christ. Incidentally, Paul didn't know when Christ would return. What he knew is that Christ will return. I love the way Paul simply said Christ will return at the proper time. Only God the Father knows when Christ will return. Until that day, a good pastor stays faithful to God's Word no matter what it costs him.

The last thing a good pastor does is remember whom he serves.

A good pastor remembers whom he serves.

...he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. 1 Timothy 6:15–16 (ESV)

God is the only sovereign. That means the God we worship is in control of everything in this world. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He doesn't report to anyone but everyone works for him, that includes Trump and Putin. He is the only one that has no beginning and will have no ending. He is incredibly pure and glorious and lives in unapproachable light. Nobody has seen him. Jesus is the only way anyone can see God, and he did that by veiling his glory in flesh so we can know him. For all eternity, all honor and all authority belong to the God the Father and the Son. That is the mighty God pastors get to serve.

Conclusion

This is why a good pastor is a man who preaches God's Word, not the pastor's word. He has his finger in the text because he represents the eternal

God of all creation. A good pastor runs from silly quarrels, the love of money, sexual temptations and youthful lusts. A good pastor runs after right relationships with people and with God. He runs after trusting in God by faith when life is hard but yet he is not detached from people's burdens and he genuinely loves. A good pastor endures all kinds of hardships in ministry without throwing in the towel. When it comes to working with people, he is gentle.

A good pastor is a fighter. They put hard work into fighting for the biblical gospel and never giving up when false teachers try to pull people away from the truth. A good pastor holds onto his confession of Christ like he holds onto a drowning man he is trying to save. He doesn't let the cares of this world distract him so he proves unfruitful.

A good pastor knows that as he leads, no matter what happens, God the father and Jesus the Son are right there watching in board meetings, counseling meetings and behind-the-scene conversations. One day he will give an account to Jesus for how he led.

A good pastor keeps with this simple plan, like riding a bicycle, putting one foot in front of the other all the way until his dying day or when Jesus returns.

A good pastor remembers what a privilege it is that he is telling people about the sovereign Lord of the entire universe and about Jesus who died for his sin.

While this text was a specific challenge to Timothy in Ephesus, and it is good guidance to all preachers who follow in Timothy's footsteps, it is a job description for each one of us to follow.



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