

The background of the cover is a photograph of a scenic landscape. In the foreground, there are tall, thin grasses with feathery seed heads, some of which are in sharp focus. Below the grasses, there are some red flowers. In the middle ground, a calm body of water, possibly a lake or a wide river, stretches across the frame. In the background, there are dark, jagged mountains under a sky filled with heavy, grey clouds. The overall mood is serene and somewhat somber due to the overcast sky.

The Nature of Ministry

A Teaching Outline

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The Nature of Ministry

An Evangelist minister is to minister both inside and outside the church. Missionaries are examples of this kind of ministry.

The apostle Paul planted churches as well as teach the churches how to conduct themselves within the church.

Ministry involves both planting and watering.

1 Cor. 3:5-9

Who is Apollos, and who is Paul, that we should be the cause of such quarrels? Why, we're only servants. Through us God caused you to believe. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. My job was to plant the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God, not we, who made it grow. The ones who do the planting or watering aren't important, but God is important because he is the one who makes the seed grow. The one who plants and the one who waters work as a team with the same purpose. Yet they will be rewarded individually, according to their own hard work. We work together as partners who belong to God. You are God's field, God's building—not ours.

Paul planted the seed of the Good News message in people's hearts. He was a missionary pioneer; he brought the message of salvation.

Apollos watered the seed. He helped the believers grow stronger in the faith. Paul founded the church in Corinth, and Apollos built on that foundation. Tragically, the believers in Corinth had split into factions, pledging loyalty to different teachers (see 1:11-13).

After the preachers' work is completed, God is the one who makes Christians grow. Our leaders should certainly be respected, but we should never place them on pedestals that create barriers between people or set them up as a substitute for Christ.

God's work involves many different individuals with a variety of gifts and abilities. There are no superstars in this task, only team members performing their own special roles. We can become useful members of God's team by setting aside our

desires to receive glory for what we do. Don't seek the praise that comes from people—it is comparatively worthless. Instead, seek approval from God.

An evangelist has responsibilities to those who have already been added to the Lord, and who are members of His One Body. This the *watering* aspect of evangelistic work. Apollos was a "waterer" of churches.

Further, evangelists have been invested with “all authority” to carry out their work, and have been commanded to allow no one to disregard.

Titus 2:15

You must teach these things and encourage your people to do them, correcting them when necessary. You have the authority to do this, so don't let anyone ignore you or disregard what you say.

Paul tells Titus to teach the Scriptures as well as to live them. We must also teach, encourage, and correct others, when necessary. We can easily feel afraid when others are older, more influential in the community, or wealthier. Like Titus, we should not let ourselves be threatened when we are trying to minister to others or provide leadership in the church.

Correctly explain the word of truth.

2 Tim. 2:15

Work hard so God can approve you. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.

Because God will examine what kind of workers we have been for him, we should build our lives on his Word and build his Word into our lives. It alone tells us how to live for him and serve him. Believers who ignore the Bible will certainly be ashamed at the judgment. Consistent and diligent study of God's Word is vital; otherwise we will be lulled into neglecting God and our true purpose for living.

A wave of persecution swept over the church.

Acts 8:1

Saul was one of the official witnesses at the killing of Stephen.

A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem, and all the believers except the apostles fled into Judea and Samaria.

Acts 8:4

But the believers who had fled Jerusalem went everywhere preaching the Good News about Jesus.

Persecution pushed the Christians beyond Jerusalem and into Judea and Samaria, thus fulfilling the second part of Jesus' command. The persecution helped spread the Good News. God would bring great results from the believers' suffering.

Throughout the New Testament, and in the lives of the apostles and the faithful members of the early church, we see this aspect of evangelism being practiced.

Teaching and perfecting the saints

Ephes. 4:12

It is the minister's responsibility to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ,

Our oneness in Christ does not destroy our individuality. The Holy Spirit has given each Christian special gifts for building up the church. Now that we have these gifts, it is crucial to use them. Are you spiritually mature, exercising the gifts God has given you? If you know what your gifts are, look for opportunities to serve.

Ask God to show you, perhaps with the help of your minister or Christian friends. Then, as you begin to recognize your special area of service, use your gifts to strengthen and encourage the church.

God has given his church an enormous responsibility—to make disciples in every nation (Matthew 28:18-20). This involves preaching, teaching, healing, nurturing, giving, administering, building, and many other tasks. If we had to fulfill this

command as individuals, we might as well give up without trying—it would be impossible. But God calls us as members of his body. Some of us can do one task; some can do another. Together we can obey God more fully than any of us could alone. It is a human tendency to overestimate what we can do by ourselves and to underestimate what we can do as a group. But as the body of Christ, we can accomplish more together than we would dream possible working by ourselves

Preparation of those who teach the gospel

1 Tim. 1:3

When I left for Macedonia, I urged you to stay there in Ephesus and stop those who are teaching wrong doctrine.

1 Tim. 1:5

The purpose of my instruction is that all the Christians there would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and sincere faith.

Many leaders and authorities today demand allegiance, some of whom would even have us turn from Christ to follow them. When they seem to know the Bible, their influence can be dangerously subtle.

They are modern-day false teachers. How can you recognize false teachers?

- (1) They teach what is contrary to the truth found in Scripture (1:3; 1:6, 7; 4:1-3).
- (2) They promote trivial and divisive controversies instead of helping people come to Jesus (1:4).
- (3) They aren't concerned about personal evidence of God's presence in their lives, spending their time on "meaningless discussions" instead (1:6).
- (4) Their motivation is to make a name for themselves (1:7). To protect yourself from the deception of false teachers, learn what the Bible teaches and remain steadfast in your faith in Christ alone.

Explain your position as a teacher.

1 Tim. 4:6

If you explain this to the brothers and sisters, you will be doing your duty as a worthy servant of Christ Jesus, one who is fed by the message of faith and the true teaching you have followed.

1 Tim. 4:11

Teach these things and insist that everyone learn them.

1 Tim. 4:13

Until I get there, focus on reading the Scriptures to the church, encouraging the believers, and teaching them.

Christ is the Savior for all, but his salvation becomes effective only for those who trust him.

Timothy was a young pastor. It would have been easy for older Christians to look down on him because of his youth. He had to earn the respect of his elders by setting an example in his speech, life, love, faith, and purity. Regardless of your age, God can use you. Whether you are young or old, don't think of your age as a handicap. Live so others can see Christ in you.

Encourage everyone to believe.

1 Tim. 6:2

If your master is a Christian, that is no excuse for being disrespectful. You should work all the harder because you are helping another believer by your efforts. Teach these truths, Timothy, and encourage everyone to obey them.

In Paul's culture there was a great social and legal gulf separating masters and slaves. But as Christians, masters and slaves became spiritual equals, brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28). Paul did not speak against the institution of slavery, but he gave guidelines for Christian slaves and Christian masters. His counsel for the master/slave relationship can be applied to the employer/employee relationship today.

Trust should be in the Living God.

1 Tim. 6:17

Tell those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone. But their trust should be in the living God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.

Ephesus was a wealthy city, and the Ephesian church probably had many wealthy members. Paul advised Timothy to deal with any potential problems by teaching that having riches carries great responsibility. If you have been blessed with wealth, then thank the Lord. Don't be proud and don't trust in your money. Use your money to do good. Be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share. No matter how much money you have, your life should demonstrate that God controls the wealth that he has placed under your care.

Appoint men to serve as elders

Titus 1:5

I left you on the island of Crete so you could complete our work there and appoint elders in each town as I instructed you.

Paul briefly describes some qualifications that the elders should have. Paul had given Timothy a similar set of instructions for the church in Ephesus (see 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:22). Notice that most of the qualifications involve character, not knowledge or skill. A person's lifestyle and relationships provide a window into his or her character. Consider these qualifications as you evaluate a person for a position of leadership in your church. It is important to have leaders who can effectively preach God's Word; it is even more important to have those who can live out God's Word and be examples for others to follow.

One qualification for an elder was that he must "enjoy having guests in his home." Christian leaders must be known for their hospitality. In the early days of Christianity, traveling evangelists and teachers were helped by Christians who housed and fed them. We would benefit from inviting people to eat with us—visitors, fellow church members, young people, those in need.

Giving hospitality is very important today because so many people struggle with loneliness. In our self-centered society, we can show that we care by being hospitable. Christians were not to entertain false teachers (2 John 1:10), but this prohibition did not apply to non-Christians in general. God wants us to be generous, courteous, and hospitable with non-Christians; through our friendship, some may be won to Christ.

Investigate complaints against elders.

1 Tim. 5:19-20

Do not listen to complaints against an elder unless there are two or three witnesses to accuse him. Anyone who sins should be rebuked in front of the whole church so that others will have a proper fear of God.

1 Tim. 5:22

Never be in a hurry about appointing an elder. Do not participate in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

Church leaders are not exempt from sin, faults, and mistakes. But they are often criticized for the wrong reasons—minor imperfections, failure to meet someone's expectations, personality clashes. Thus, Paul said that accusations should not even be heard unless two or three witnesses confirm them.

Sometimes church leaders should be confronted about their behavior, and sometimes they should be rebuked. But all rebuking must be done fairly and lovingly and for the purpose of restoration.

Church leadership is a heavy responsibility. As difficult as it might be, Timothy was not to waver on any of Paul's instructions (and particularly the instructions about rebuking elders). Any needed discipline or rebuke must be administered without regard to Timothy's personal inclinations or favoritism. Likewise, leadership in the church today must be handled with maturity, faithfulness, godliness, and lack of favoritism. The health of a body of believers is far more important than playing favorites with someone who is not meeting the standards set forth here.

Paul says that a church should never be in a hurry about choosing its leaders, especially the pastor, because major problems or sins might be overlooked. It is a serious responsibility to choose church leaders.

They must have strong faith and be morally upright, having the qualities described in 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9. Not everyone who wants to be a church leader is eligible. Be certain of an applicant's qualifications before asking him or her to take a leadership position.

Prevent those from speaking who are upsetting the church.

2 Tim. 4:2

Preach the word of God. Be persistent, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching.

It was important for Timothy to preach the Good News so that the Christian faith could spread throughout the world. We believe in Christ today because people like Timothy were faithful to their mission. It is still vitally important for believers to spread the Good News. Half the people who have ever lived are alive today, and most of them do not know Christ. He is coming soon, and he wants to find his faithful believers ready for him. It may be inconvenient to take a stand for Christ or to tell others about his love, but preaching the Word of God is the most important responsibility the church and its members have been given. Be prepared for, courageous in, and sensitive to God-given opportunities to tell the Good News.

We should always be ready to serve God in any situation, whether or not it is convenient. Be sensitive to the opportunities God gives you.

Paul told Timothy to "correct, rebuke, and encourage." It is difficult to accept correction, to be told we have to change. But no matter how much the truth hurts, we must be willing to listen to it so we can more fully obey God

Many speakers, teachers, and writers talk about the pursuit of knowledge. But often they don't want knowledge; they want power. Such people won't listen to "sound and wholesome teaching." Instead, they "reject the truth and chase after myths." You can see this everywhere—from liberal churches to university campuses.

People claiming to have a bit more enlightenment than what the dusty Bible has to say; people claiming to improve on God's words. Such people have several things in common:

(1) *They do not tolerate the truth.* They have no interest or respect for absolute truth or any standard for judgment.

(2) *They reject truth for sensationalism.* They want truth that fits their situation and makes sense for them. What they feel, what works for them, what seems compelling—that is their truth and they claim an absolute right to it. No one should even attempt to tell them differently.

(3) *They gather viewpoints to suit their selfish desires.* Although they profess objectivity, their only defense for their viewpoints is that those viewpoints suit their desires.

Such teachers have a following because they are telling people "whatever their itching ears want to hear." These people are following myths. Be careful. False teaching can be found in many places—even inside the doors of some churches. Like Timothy, you must "keep a clear mind in every situation" and seek God's Word for the truth.

People must behave properly in the household of God.

1 Tim. 3:15

So that if I can't come for a while, you will know how people must conduct themselves in the household of God. This is the church of the living God, which is the pillar and support of the truth.

The Bible is the written form of what God expects us to know and do. God chose Paul to carry out one phase of the plan. Through Paul, the inspired teaching was written down. As such, it was passed on to Timothy. Then, it was passed on to others. Later, it was passed on to us. Times have changed, but the original authority remains. Because the Bible is from God, it must be studied seriously, understood thoroughly, and applied faithfully. Paul intended this letter to teach believers how to conduct themselves. We would do well to read carefully.

Ministers are guardians of that which has been entrusted to them.

1 Tim. 6:20

Timothy, guard what God has entrusted to you. Avoid godless, foolish discussions with those who oppose you with their so-called knowledge.

The book of 1 Timothy provides guiding principles for local churches, including rules for public worship and qualifications for elders (overseers, pastors), deacons, and special church workers (widows). Paul tells the church leaders to correct incorrect doctrine and to deal lovingly and fairly with all people in the church. The church is not organized simply for the sake of organization but so that Christ can be honored and glorified. While studying these guidelines, don't lose sight of what is most important in the life of the church—knowing God, working together in loving harmony, and taking God's Good News to the world.

Fight the good fight of faith.

1 Tim. 1:18

Timothy, my son, here are my instructions for you, based on the prophetic words spoken about you earlier. May they give you the confidence to fight well in the Lord's battles.

Paul highly valued the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:1). Through prophecy important messages of warning and encouragement came to the church. Just as pastors are ordained and set apart for ministry in church today, Timothy had been set apart for ministry when elders laid their hands on him. Apparently at this ceremony, several believers had prophesied about Timothy's gifts and strengths. These words from the Lord must have encouraged Timothy throughout his ministry.

1 Tim. 6:12

Fight the good fight for what we believe. Hold tightly to the eternal life that God has given you, which you have confessed so well before many witnesses.

Paul uses active and forceful verbs to describe the Christian life: run, pursue, fight, and hold tightly. Some think Christianity is a passive religion that advocates waiting for God to act. On the contrary, we must have an *active* faith, training, working hard, sacrificing, and doing what we know is right. Is it time for action on your part? Christian service, like athletics, requires training and sacrifice. Our discipline and obedience largely define whether or not we will be contributors or merely spectators. How would other believers rank your contributing role on Christ's team?

Ministers should work with gentleness

2 Tim. 2:25

They should gently teach those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will believe the truth.

As a teacher, Timothy helped those who were confused about the truth. Paul's advice to Timothy, and to all who teach God's truth, is to be kind and gentle, patiently and courteously explaining the truth. Good teaching never promotes quarrels or foolish arguments. Whether you are teaching Sunday school, leading a Bible study, or preaching in church, remember to listen to people's questions and treat them respectfully, while avoiding foolish debates. If you do this, those who oppose you will be more willing to hear what you have to say and perhaps turn from their error.

Teach those things that all must know in order to receive eternal life.

2 Peter 1:12-15

I plan to keep on reminding you of these things—even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth. Yes, I believe I should keep on reminding you of these things as long as I live. But the Lord Jesus Christ has shown me that my days here on earth are numbered and I am soon to die. So I will work hard to make these things clear to you. I want you to remember them long after I am gone.

Believers must not neglect the basics of their faith, even as they go on to study deeper truths. Just as an athlete needs constant practice.

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House
2007. Print

#15 --- Continually *reminding* God's people of that which they must know and practice in order to be pleasing in His sight, and ultimately to achieve eternal salvation --- II Timothy 2:14; Titus 3:1 (see II Peter 1:12-15).

#16 --- He must solemnly protest, or earnestly speak out against, or warn against, those things which may lead to the ruin of the people of God --- II Timothy 2:14. "*Warn* them before God against....." (NIV). This is the Greek word *diamarturomai*, which means "to testify or protest solemnly and intensely; a solemn charge or warning."

#17 --- Exhortation --- I Timothy 4:13; 5:1; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 2:15. The Greek word employed here is *parakaleo*, which literally means "to call alongside." It means "to encourage, comfort, console; persuade, entreat, implore, beseech."

#18 --- Command or Prescribe --- I Timothy 4:11; 5:7. This is the Greek word *parangello*, which means "to give orders, command, instruct, direct; used of all kinds of persons in authority" (Arndt & Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT and Other Early Christian Literature*, p. 613). NOTE: This is also the word used in I Timothy 1:3 and 6:17 (see #3) which is translated "instruct" or "charge."

#19 --- The public reading of Scripture --- I Timothy 4:13. Tertullian (160 - 220 A.D.) referred to this as the evangelist reading from the Scriptures in a public assembly and then expounding upon what was read. "The early church followed the example of the Jewish synagogue in publicly reading the Scriptures at every service" (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Volume 11, p. 374).