

Marks Of A Good Servant

In this passage Paul's primary focus is pastors. He wrote to Timothy his spiritual son with advice and instruction. However, it concerns all pastors, it is directed towards me as a pastor, but also its commands and instruction are normative for all believers. Working through 1st Timothy is convicting for me as I gain better and better understanding of what God desires for His servant leaders. This morning we explore not only Paul counsel to Timothy but to you and me.

The key phrase is found in 1 Timothy 4:6, **“you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus.”** Paul essentially told Timothy, **“You will be a good servant when you live out and teach the Word of God.”** The word “diakonos” here means servant of one's master. Timothy is not like the diakonos in chapter 3 the one serving in the office of Deacon. He is rather a pastor, which is also a servant of God. He is an elder and serves in a unique way, Timothy is overseeing several churches in Ephesus and their leadership. He is an apostolic delegate and servant of Paul the Apostle. Paul is also a servant of Christ, as we all are. Paul himself was a diakonos or servant of God and even referred to himself as a “doulos” or slave of Christ. So, even though this letter is written to Timothy and contains instruction for leaders of the church, it also applies to every believer.

Both letters written to Timothy by Paul are concerned with how to behave in the church and all that entails. Paul lays out how are we to understand pastoral ministry, which gives direction to every other kind of behavior in the church. However, Paul's instruction here goes beyond Timothy. It is normative and what he says to Timothy, what he says to me as a pastor and also is what the Spirit of God wants said to all Christians, for all Christians are called to ministry. This passage,

starting in verse 6 and running down to the end of the chapter, provides a rich summary of all of Apostle Paul's inspired instruction for those who serve the church. It all begins with the statement, "you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus."

How do you define a good servant? What are the marks of a good servant of Christ Jesus? This is important for the church to understand for it is the church that is to use these marks to know who God has called to serve the church. I want to equip you, my brothers and sisters, as the church with some of the marks by which to evaluate men for leadership and to inspire you to apply these marks to your own ministry. Here are some of the marks or commands defining a servant leader of God.

11 Marks Of A Good Servant

Mark One: A pastor warns his people of error. In verse 6, we read, "If you put these things before the brothers." The Greek verb means to remind, literally to place under or to bring to the attention of the brethren. Paul is writing, Timothy, if you remind the brethren of these things, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus. Remind the brethren of what things? What Paul wrote prior to this statement; that in the later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons propagated by hypocritical liars who are reprehensible in their deception, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God created to be gratefully shared with joy by those who believe and know the truth. By the way teaching God's truth is not just for pastors, this is what the father is to do for his family as he instructs and guides them spiritually.

As a pastor when you point out error, you are a noble servant of Jesus Christ. This goes back to the beginning of this epistle. Paul wrote, "I urge you ... charge certain

persons not to teach any different doctrine,⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.” (1 Timothy 1:3-4) Unfortunately, some men have strayed from the truth of God. They turned aside to fruitless discussions, wanting to be teachers of the law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions. We must instruct men not to teach strange doctrines. A current fad or strange doctrine is that Christians must fulfill Jewish law. This is not what the Word of God teaches. The Scriptures teach that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law. We are to obey the commands of Christ, not Jewish man-made laws.

In verse 18 of chapter 1, Paul commands Timothy again, to keep the faith, fight the good fight of faith and maintain a good conscience. Saying, if you hold on to the faith, you will be different than those who have rejected it and suffered the shipwreck of the “Faith” as these have been delivered to Satan to learn not to blaspheme God. We find the same kind of instruction in Titus. We find the same kind of instruction in the sixth chapter of 1st Timothy. We find this same instruction all through 2 Timothy. We read of it in 2nd and 3rd John, and Jude and 1st Thessalonians chapter 5. The noble pastor or under-shepherd of Jesus Christ warns his people of error. He understands the devastating damage of believing lies.

Mark Two: A pastor is a faithful student of Scripture. Paul says in verse 6, as a good servant you are “being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.” As the Word of God constantly nourishes one, a continual process of spiritual growth grounds them in truth. Spiritual growth is a life-long process of feeding on the Word of God. The phrase “words of the faith” refers to Scripture, the Bible. The words “good doctrine” refers to what the Scripture affirms as truths. I believe the Scripture to be the Word of God when accurately interpreted and when properly interpreted they are God’s words and

statements of fact, not mine.

One should spend an entire lifetime mastering the Bible, the only Book through which God reveals His truth. The Bible becomes the sole content of ones ministry, the sole theme of ones preaching and it must saturate ones mind and soul. This is true not only for a pastor or preacher, but it is also true of every Christian; we are all to spend our lives mastering the truth of the Word of God, the Bible.

We are to saturate ourselves with the teaching of Scripture, the content, the words of the faith. I think of William Tyndale, in prison shortly before being martyred on October 6, 1536. He wrote the official over the prison asking for some consideration because he was suffering greatly. This in part is what he wrote, “That if I am to remain here during the winter, you will request the Procurer to be kind enough to send me from my goods, which he has in his possession, a warmer cap, for I suffer extremely from cold ... A warmer coat also, for that which I have is very thin; also a piece of cloth to patch my leggings. ... I wish also his permission to have a candle in the evening, for it is wearisome to sit alone in the dark. ... But above all, I entreat and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the Procurer that he may kindly permit me to have my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Grammar, and Hebrew Dictionary, that I may spend my time with that study. ... I shall be patient, abiding the will of God to the glory of the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ, whose spirit, I pray, may ever direct your heart. Amen.” Tyndale was lost when he was separated from the Word of God. A faithful pastor is in the Word of God and warns his people of error and he becomes an expert in handling God’s Word by its truth. To be separated from the Word of God is the most terrible thing.

Mark Three: A pastor avoids the influence of unholy teaching. In verse 7 it says, “Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness.” Have nothing to do with them - refuse them, avoid them and shun

them. As a pastor and as Christians we are to separate from that which is unholy.

Does someone have a NASB or King James translation this morning? Please read verse 7. A number of translations of verse 7 include “wives tales.” The NASB reads, “**But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women.**” Now we have to explain, lest we think the Apostle Paul has a slur here towards older women. This was, however, a sarcastic moniker used in philosophical circles to indicate gullibility. Older women are picked on because they lived longer and old men died sooner. As older women get older, they lose their ability to process information and Paul refers to that only to express the fact that this is unreasonable, irrational that you would listen to any of the fables of old women or fables held to by society or the world. Many have been ruined, not by learning error as error, but by sitting under someone teaching error as truth. Being seduced with error from someone who believed that that error was true. All one has to do is look at what, some who call themselves Christian, are teaching in churches and on TV – they have departed from God’s truth for their own version of truth.

You see one cannot become doctrinally liberal and depart from the truth by reading and studying the Bible. You have to go to school and sit under the teaching of a liberal. Nobody ever became a liberal of doctrine by reading the Bible. It is impossible. You have to sit under someone who warps the truth to the bent of man’s desires. Psalm 1 puts it this way, “**How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ² But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.**” (Psalm 1:1-2) So a faithful pastor of Christ Jesus warns his people, becomes expert in Scripture and theology and avoids the corrupting influence of unholy teachers.

Mark Four: A pastor is trained in personal godliness. Train yourself by the Word. To train implies rigor, it implies strenuous effort, self-denying discipline in the direction of godliness - pulling up the loose ends, girding up the loins of your mind. As Paul wrote, “I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” (1 Corinthians 9:27) Maintaining a pure conscience so that when you are accused of evil or a hidden life of shame like the Apostle Paul was, you too can say, “Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.” (Acts 23:1) Pastors cannot teach nor can parents teach if they are hypocrites by their lifestyle.

My brothers and sisters, we are to train ourselves for godliness using the means of grace that have been given to us in the Word and by the Spirit. Verses 7 and 8 instruct, “Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸ for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” Train yourself in godliness rather than for the physical, because godliness is profitable for all things. It holds promise not only for the present life, but also for the life to come. Physical exercise holds some promise for this life and as you can see I would benefit, but the spiritual training is for the life both here and to come.

Now think of what we just learned from verses 7 and 8 and carry that into verse 9, which says, “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.” This is one of at least five trustworthy statements found in the Pastoral Epistles that became self-evident or things that Christians said to one another because they were reflective of truth in a given culture. The believers in Ephesus lived in a culture that was obsessed with body worship; a society, in which, the people Timothy was ministering to had developed a priority of the physical. The churches and the Christians needed to develop a priority of spiritual exercise. A pastor, while being responsible for his physical health, is far more consumed with his godliness and the

disciplines that produce godliness. So a faithful pastor of Christ Jesus warns his people, becomes an expert in Scripture, avoids the corrupting influence of unholy teachers and he is also committed to personal godliness.

Mark Five: A pastor is committed to hard work. In verse 10, “[For to this end we toil and strive.](#)” For the sake of people’s spiritual life, for their salvation and to teach the truths of God a pastor is to work to the point of exhaustion. It is hard work, it is a struggle, but it is a calling in ones life and is well worth it as one keeps their focus on the life to come.

I will be honest, for me, ministry is often sweating labor. It is, at times, an agonizing struggle. There is no other way to define it. It is relentless. Until you have done it, you do not understand what it is to preach every week of your life. For years as a missionary, which has its own struggles, I did not fully appreciate the life of a pastor. To go here and there to meet the needs of people, to serve and to make the Word of God clear and to be accurate and to be powerful and to be insightful and to be fresh is a relentless life. It is the life of a servant, but a life also full and rewarding. I tell young men, if God has not called you to the life of a pastor, do not do it for it will be exhausting and will wear you down. If on the other hand if God has called you it will still be exhausting, but it will energize you.

It is on Monday evening when I begin to think about what I have to prepare for the following Sunday. So I basically can rest, from ministry, from about noon on Sunday until I get home from work on Monday. Then it all begins again, month after month after month and year after year after year for a lifetime. It is a labor, nothing less than a labor. The heroes of our history understood that. I think about John Calvin who wrote the Institutes, tracts and commentaries on almost every book of the Bible. He gave sermons and lectures - ten sermons every two weeks and all of them Scripture exposition, and he worked in the original languages.

Look at Luther, between 1510 and 1546 he preached over 3,000 sermons, he preached many days a week - sometimes four different sermons on the Lord's Day. He was always studying, always preaching. Add to that family responsibility, ministry responsibility, care of souls and at times physical illness. Pastoring is work. The ones that worked the hardest are the ones that left the greatest imprint. I told my father as he lay dying that he had given my brothers and I a great gift by teaching us how to work and to enjoy work.

But before you feel impressed by or sorry for pastors this is what parents are called to do as well in the lives of their children in order to make an imprint in their lives and the lives of grandchildren and great grandchildren from generation to generation to generation until Christ returns. **Fathers and mothers, I implore you to not only teach your children the scriptures, but to also instill in them a work ethic.** Society is filled with people who take and do not know how to work. Teach you children how to work hard, to give instead of taking and to enjoy work.

Paul explains the life of a pastor in 2 Corinthians 4, **“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹ For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you.”** (2 Corinthians 4:8-12) The life of a pastor is exhausting, but rewarding. It kills our mortal flesh but births a life in us of Christ. Paul summed up this call to ministry, **“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me.”** (Philippians 1:21–22) I have fully embraced what Scriptures teaches for the life of a pastor and my wife, Joyce, has been willing to pay the price along with me – that I may serve our awesome God and His people, you. So a faithful pastor of Christ Jesus warns his people, becomes an expert in

Scripture, avoids the corrupting influence of unholy teachers, he is committed to personal godliness and strives for these elements in his life by hard work.

Mark Six: A pastor is to teach with authority. Reading verse 11, “[Command and teach these things.](#)” This is a command. Actually, it is an active command for one to keep teaching, always keep teaching “[these things.](#)” What things? All the things related to divine truth and virtue. This is a call for Timothy and it is a call me, as a pastor and it is a call for you as parents to assert yourself with other people and your children with the truth of God. Since Paul’s focus is on pastors let me return to his focus, but remembering that all we examine this morning, in general, applies to all believers. A pastor is not just in church to share his thoughts and share his ideas. A pastor is to command the people of the church; command them to repent, command them to believe the gospel, command them to bow their knee to the authority of the Word of God and to teach them all things Christ has commanded. Where does a pastor get this authority? From God, he is an under-shepherd of Christ. A pastor’s authority is from the Word of God. A pastor has no authority of his own. So a faithful pastor of Christ Jesus warns his people, becomes an expert in Scripture, avoids the corrupting influence of unholy teachers, he is committed to personal godliness, strives for these elements in his life by hard work and this enables him to teach with authority.

Mark Seven: A pastor is to be a model of spiritual virtue. Verse 12 says, “[Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.](#)” Now we are getting down to the life behind the message. Let no one look down on your youthfulness, this may not apply to me for I am getting old. However, let people look not at your age, but at your speech, conduct or lifestyle, love, faith, faithfulness, purity, sexual purity more specifically, purity in matters of money, show yourself as an example of others to help them believe. I am a pastor who is not sinless, but lives a life striving for purity. It is

this lifestyle of purity that causes all the critics to disappear. My older brother has been a strong critic of Christians and of me. He believes most who call themselves Christian to be hypocrites. Our lives have taken very different paths and we have not had a lot in common or seen much of each other as adults. I remember when my mom was dying and my older brother and I were together more than any time since we graduated from high school. One night he looked at me and said, “You really are who you say our are.” What a great compliment, this is what I strive to be - a man true to God and for His truth to be consistent in my life. I desire this for your lives also, so I preach God’s Word that it may come to dwell deeper in your hearts and minds.

Thomas Fuller, a puritan, a pastor and historian of the 17th century said, “**Though the words of the wise be as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, yet their examples are the hammer to drive the nails in to take a deeper hold.**” This is not only true for a pastor but for parents as well. Over time people come to see you over the long haul of life and come to believe that what you preach and teach is really what you believe because it is what you live. Nothing is as powerful for a pastor or parent as the model of spiritual living. So a faithful pastor of Christ Jesus warns his people, becomes an expert in Scripture, avoids the corrupting influence of unholy teachers, he is committed to personal godliness, strives for these elements in his life by hard work enabling him to teach with authority as bolstered by his living a life of spiritual virtue.

Mark Eight: A pastor maintains a thoroughly Biblical ministry. Verse 13 reads, “**Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.**” This sums up what pastors are supposed to do. Read the Scripture, explain the Scripture and apply the Scripture. Pastors are to be men of the Bible. A pastor’s life is to be focused on one book, the Bible. Should this not be true for all Christians? Are you not to live and share the gospel with whomever the Lord

places in your life's path? Of course, the answer is yes! So, what Paul is teaching is normative, it is for all Christians.

I know at times some may feel I can spend too long in preaching through a book. It took 2 years and 10 months for me to preach through the Gospel According to John. However, I want the meat and meaning to nourish you. Besides it could be worse, David Martin Lloyd Jones, one of the men I greatly admire, preached in the Book of Romans for twelve years and didn't finish chapter 14. The work of a pastor is in the Word; the work of a pastor is not committees, as much as they are needed, it is not organizing events as much as they reach out into the community. The work of a pastor is to spend time in the Scripture, in prayer until he has something to say based on the Word of God that is worthwhile and will help people fulfill Paul's ambition "to live is Christ, and to die is gain." A pastor helps people to live the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. So a faithful pastor of Christ Jesus warns his people, becomes an expert in Scripture, avoids the corrupting influence of unholy teachers, he is committed to personal godliness, strives for these elements in his life by hard work enabling him to teach with authority as bolstered by his living a life of spiritual virtue that grows through his study of the Bible and being a man of the Bible.

Mark Nine: A pastor is passionate regarding his calling. Verse 15, "Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress." Paul keeps coming back to this. It is all about the Word of God. It is all about reading it, explaining it, applying it. To practice these things, this is the life of a pastor. This is a pastor's life; it is not a job. This is where a pastor lives and moves and the essences of who he is. I cannot imagine being anything else. This is where I live and have my being. Frankly, if I do not pastor, I have no plan B. So a faithful pastor of Christ Jesus warns his people, becomes an expert in Scripture, avoids the corrupting influence of unholy teachers, he is committed to personal godliness,

strives for these elements in his life by hard work enabling him to teach with authority as bolstered by his living a life of spiritual virtue that grows through his study of the Bible and his life is molded by being passionate about his work.

Mark Ten: A pastor is growing spiritually. I am deeply appreciative of God's grace in my life. If I am fully absorbed in the matters of ministry, both in the knowledge of Scripture and its application in my life; the change and spiritual growth should be evident to all who watch my life. I am a work in progress; I have not arrived and will not arrive until I am in heaven. I am growing spiritually. Let us at Canyon Bible exhibit love and grace towards each other. We are all in this together, growing in Christ. Let us bolster each other as we sojourn through this world toward heaven.

One thing I have learned and am still learning is I am wrong at times. I don't ever want to say something wrong and then spend my whole life defending it. I don't ever want to do something and then try to defend myself for having done something that was sinful or insensitive or unholy or offensive. I am learning when I am wrong to take my medicine and grow. I am working at humbling myself. I hope those of you here have seen progress in my life in these areas. I appreciate how forgiving you all are of me when I mess up.

So a faithful pastor of Christ Jesus warns his people, becomes an expert in Scripture, avoids the corrupting influence of unholy teachers, he is committed to personal godliness, strives for these elements in his life by hard work enabling him to teach with authority as bolstered by his living a life of spiritual virtue that grows through his study of the Bible, his life is molded by being passionate about his work, thus he grows spiritually.

Mark Eleven: My final mark is a pastor perseveres in ministry. Verse 16, says, "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so

doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.” A pastor perseveres – by paying close attention to what they teach. Persevering to work at how they think, speak and live. Persevering from spiritual attack, for if you are working to stay true to God and His Word, you are an enemy of Satan and he will attack. Paul is instructing Timothy, and pastors and all Christians keeping doing what is true and right, keep on keeping on. God will bless those who persevere. One of the greatest blessings I think of in the Scripture was given to Abraham and I desire it for myself and for you. God told Abraham, with slight paraphrased, **“I will bless you and make ~~you~~ Christ’s name great, so that you will be a blessing in the name of Christ.”** (Genesis 12:2) I desire and encourage you also to spend our lives blessing others in Christ’s name. Heaven awaits those who persevere.

So a faithful pastor of Christ Jesus warns his people, becomes an expert in Scripture, avoids the corrupting influence of unholy teachers, he is committed to personal godliness, strives for these elements in his life by hard work enabling him to teach with authority as bolstered by his living a life of spiritual virtue that grows through his study of the Bible, his life is molded by being passionate about his work, thus he grows spiritually because he perseveres in ministry and serves with a view of heaven. Wow! That is a lot to live up to and my only hope is by the power of Christ’s Spirit that dwells with in me, and the help, love and support of all of you.

Father, we thank you for this word to us. The reminders are clear, straightforward, helpful, and necessary. We ask you to empower us to be obedient in all matters so that we might truly know what it means to be used to bring salvation to those who hear the Gospel of Christ we preach, teach and share. Use us Father to serve others with love, grace and mercy. Use us Father – use me as a pastor and use all of us as a community of Christ to Your glory! Amen.