

## **2025-03-02 - Ministers as Godly Examples - Shawn Mathis (3525429384066) SermonOnly**

Let us turn to our Bibles to 1st Timothy chapter 4. 1st Timothy chapter 4 verses 11 through 16. Excuse me, 12 through 16. 1st Timothy 4 verses 12 and following.

Let us listen attentively to the word of God. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy, with the laying on of hands of the eldership or presbytery. Meditate on these things, give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine.

Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you. Let us pray. We implore you, spirit of truth and life, to take these words, bring them to life again in our hearts, God Almighty.

Not just in our examination of ministers and how they are called to be examples before the world and do their job in faithful ministry by the power of the spirit as he's exhorted here, but we too have been given gifts as well. We too are examples one to another, our Lord and Savior. And so may we as saints learn from this as well.

By the name of Jesus we pray. Amen. Although not often spoken out loud, we all know intuitively that leaders, whether social, political, or in the church, are not just there to get the job done.

They are also there as examples to others in the best of times. That would be, of course, in these leadership positions, the best of us. In society or in a business and the like, that is not always the case, having the best.

But in the church, we expect more and should. For the world is watching us, especially our leaders, because they have a public office by definition. These verses highlight the important ways in which a pastor in particular are examples to others.

And so we look more carefully here, we can see in ways in which we can help, assist, or certainly always pray for our church leaders and pastors in particular, not only in our church but our Presbyterian elsewhere, to be godly, holy examples to the brethren in particular. Be an example to the brothers, or to the believers, in the word, verse 12. That's what he's highlighting here.

### **Example of Word and Conduct**

The example of word and conduct, verse 12. He starts out there, Let no one despise your youth. We might say today your youthfulness.

The context here, therefore the list of virtues, is in contrast. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to believers in word, conduct, love, spirit, faith, and purity. Don't be like a typical young man many people expect of the youth, to be foolish, to be energetic in the wrong way, but rather be grave and temperate and the like and the other like gifts of the Holy Spirit, of course.

So that's the context here. The opposite of youthful foolishness is the implication. People are going to look down at Timothy or other young pastors, of course, because age does and can make a difference.

They don't have much experience. Maybe you're worried, or they are worried, and perhaps even rightfully so in today's case, of the pastor not being prepared for his ministry, because he hasn't been around the block enough times. And that is something that could be a factor in seeking for a church officer, of course.

But here, in particular, we see the contrast between the two. The word, but, is pretty strong there. They're going to perhaps despise you, look down upon you, but show otherwise that you're not just a run-of-the-mill youthful guy, right? God is working in you.

Indeed, he has given you good characteristics and gifts, as we read there in verse 14. So age, as I said, is a factor, can be a factor in church officers, but not the only factor. This is hinted at in 1 Timothy 3, verse 16, in that chapter, or verse 6, excuse me, that chapter on the characteristics of the office of bishop or pastor or minister.

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. And being a novice often does imply lack of experience, and behind the lack of experience is what? Often, but not always, a lack of age. Because you don't have that experience typically comes with age.

And again, I say typically. We see here, obviously, that Timothy was a younger man. So there can be cases, but we've got to be very careful, of course, in examining them, that the spirit of God is really upon them, and they have shown a mature, godly life in their example.

And that's why marriage, for instance, is a good indicator of what's being done in the family life and the like, especially when they're young. So, they are therefore called, young pastors in particular, I think that everyone's watching them, but all pastors, and we are supposed to therefore be an example of godliness in this world and in the church. Public leaders have two jobs, at least, to exercise their public powers for good, for the good of God's people, for the kingdom of God, and to exercise well their public powers for good.

You can do it in a most ruthless manner, of course, and a godless manner, in fact. I have good goals or aims as a pastor. But how you get there is also important often.

So they must exercise well their public powers for good. And we see those public powers for good unfold in verses 14, 15, and 16 in particular. To exercise it well, both as a manner of doing a good job in their own personal conduct, as well in exercising their office.

So, they are to do these things in a well manner. We're going to go through the list here. And they are, of course, examples to the world, although the text specifies two believers we know elsewhere.

The world is watching them. They watch the apostles in the book of Acts, and they're critiquing them, and they're asking them questions, and the apostles interact with them in different ways. And they're aware that the world is watching them.

But that's not the primary consideration. And the danger, of course, of making it the primary consideration, in so far as the temptation is to water down the ministry because the world is watching us, and they think you're mean, or they think you're not worldly enough, you're not whatever else they think they expect out of a pastor. And you're like, well, no, the standards of the pastor is from the Bible, and is especially for the church, in which we are an example for.

But it's still a factor we need to be considerate of. Specifically here, example to believers, so that they know that God is central to the leader's life. And so that they see that God does work through sinners, men with feet of clay.

That is, we too are sinners, the church leaders, brothers and sisters. Even in spite of that, as we talked about in Sunday School class, in sanctification, God is working in us, and He has gifted us, we pray, indeed that's true, so that we can be an example to you that we can change, and we can stand for Jesus, you can change, and you can stand for Jesus. It's okay.

In fact, encourage, as we read here, to be an example, to look for examples, to want to have godly patterns to follow. From this, we should all be encouraged to strive in holiness. The Spirit of God is indeed working in them.

Their examples, of course, are part of the human experience. It's another expression of our mutual interdependence as believers. We need each other.

We need each other, of course, for buying a car. We need a job. We need someone else who's an expert on making a car.

And the guy who makes a car isn't just one guy, it's lots of guys. And so they work together. That's how society works.

It's a bunch of people working together and being in communion with one another with respect to either getting things done, or encouraging one another, or helping one another, hospitals and farming and everything else. But morally as well, a good society reinforces God's graces. A bad society, as we know, chafes at the soul.

We see so many bad examples. We're worried about our kids seeing bad examples. Not just outside the church, but even inside the church.

We want it. It's intuitive. This is to be expected.

The church, as a most holy institute, therefore, should take these matters seriously when it talks about being concerned of good examples within them and among them. Because this is our safe space. That's how I describe it in my book.

We want a safe space for God's people. And that's, in particular, the church. Not just on Sunday, but wherever Christians are.

The church organic, as we call it. What pastors say or don't say. What pastors do or don't do.

That's the first two ideas here. That we're an example to one another. That as pastors, in particular, examples or patterns in which you look and say, Hey, that's what I want to do as well.

In word and in conduct. Word and conduct, of course, are two very broad categories here. Very clearly.

And in word, you can also say about what they don't say as well. Both their private word and their public word. Although, here with a public letter to the public officer, Timothy, dealing with public manners.

The emphasis, of course, the highlighting here, is on his public words and his ministry. Not just a form of public worship, but whatever else he's doing throughout the week. The Apostle Paul wasn't like, well, I'm only going to be concerned with what I say on Sunday.

But the rest of the week, I don't care what I do amongst the Jews. Of course he is. He's teaching all the time.

Whenever he had opportunity to do these things. And so the word and the conduct that we have as believers, as pastors, is particularly important wherever it may be when we function as a pastor. And people don't just observe their preaching, of course, but their interpersonal skills and acts of words throughout their ministry.

And this is especially the case in teaching and preaching, wherever that may be. Now, what they say and what they do in conduct, that is manner of life. Privately, again, is important.

That's why chapter 3 is there. This is a list of qualifications we expect from a pastor, and part of it includes his family life. It's always there.

You can't separate the two. People, unfortunately, want to do that, especially if it's someone they really, really like. It's been my experience.

I'm like, well, it's okay what he did over here. But over here, he's a great preacher. Well, he just disqualified himself.

Come on. It doesn't matter. Sorry.

So this condenses all the assumed particulars of the prior chapter, I think, when he talks about conduct. In word and in conduct. It's a very broad word.

It just means manner of life or conversation, as the old translation sometimes, you heard from the KJV. A bishop, then, must be blameless, you read in chapter 3. The husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy or filthy, and the like. Most of that is about conduct, not just gifts.

And again, public conduct, especially. The two must not be contradictory. It's private and it's public life.

And in spirit, the words that he has, that he says, in encouragement, the preaching of the law and of the gospel, and the conduct in particular, must always be in love and spirit and faith and in purity. In spirit, Matthew Henry takes the meaning to be in spiritual mindedness, which makes sense, given that we cannot see if the pastor has a spirit himself, per se. We can't read people's hearts.

All you can know is their actions, and what they're saying, and the like. And so the pastor, of course, should be encouraged to be spiritually minded, and with respect to his ministry, that is, preaching the things of God and the gospels, and who he is in spiritual worship. It's about being an example to believers in spirituality, so that they can see that we take these things seriously.

The life of faith, of course, in his words and his conduct, and his life in general, in fact, should be an expression of faith and love and in purity there, so that either the pastor's own confession or belief, which is, of course, hard to see in the heart, but you can see with the words, expresses faith and trust in Jesus Christ, and love and care and consideration of who he is and the saints as well. All these things are part of what it means to be a pastor, and it should be such that it can be seen and understood, that their conduct and their words express love, express spiritual mindedness, express faith, and, of course, purity. When it talks about faith, it also may include there not just what we think of subjectively.

Does he have faith? Does he believe? Of course, you're going to examine him before he becomes a minister. Are you a Christian, even? Do you baptize in a church? That must necessarily follow. But here, it probably means, a number of times does, in fact, you may not realize this in the New Testament, the objective content of the gospel, to defend the faith, we say sometimes.

We're not saying defend your own personal beliefs and trust in Jesus, but defend the gospel truth as a public matter of God Almighty in the church, in the Bible, defending the faith, we call it. That's perhaps the idea here, but either way, the pastor must have both. Impurity, of course, in particular here, the last sub-point, is important to church officers, especially for young men, since they fall into many temptations of impurity.

Being married, of course, is especially helpful here, but also in interactions with the saints. We have a long-standing rule that existed before Billy Graham, but it has been popularized as the Billy Graham rule, and that's a pretty good rule as it goes. When it comes to counseling and being with a woman, not your wife, you don't do it behind closed doors.

The number of times we hear about scandals, and yes, the men are wrong, the pastors are wrong, but the women need to be aware. Don't, you know, look, don't do that. Don't do that.

You can call it counseling or whatever you want, but you're just setting yourself up. Avoid what? The means, causes, occasions, and provocations thereunto. I mean, it's common sense.

And I bring this up because, again, even in Christian circles, unfortunately, they mock the Billy Graham rule on what used to be, what recently was called the Pence rule, because he even brought it up at one time, apparently, and people were just laughing at it, even Christians as a whole. But it makes sense. When he says purity here, he doesn't mean you just sit there, I'm going to be pure somehow, but you've got to be using common sense as a church leader in what you do and how you interact with people.

## **Example of Gifts**

Examples of gifts, verses 13 to 15. "'Till I come again,' Paul writes, 'give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.'" "Do not neglect the gift that is in you." Which was given to you by the prophecy and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

So give attention here. This word means to pay close attention, of course. And we don't want sloppy church leaders.

Especially in the pastorate. These are serious matters that require prayer, meditation, and careful attention. A good example of that is in the Old Testament, where God gave that special office of priest and the sacrifices in the temple.

And they had to do certain things in a certain way, so a fair amount of detail, because God was concerned about His holiness and these things being done publicly and formally before the whole world, or in particular the people of God. That God is a holy God who cares about not just big holiness, but even small holiness in the details of life. And godliness.

And so that is an ongoing principle, though we don't have priests, we don't have that level of detail for public worship, for example, or even our life. Praise be to God. We have a lot more freedom in the New Testament compared to the Jews and the number of restrictions they had.

But nevertheless, it teaches this lesson that is unfortunately lost sometimes, in my experience, in the broader churches of America. We're told here to give attention. He mentions this two other times here in the text, using two other words.

That highlights this idea of paying attention, concentrating, meditating, focusing on, and the like. This is what he's called to do. To give attention to what? To duties.

To pay attention, to give attention, to work hard, and to watch what you have before you. To give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Reading, of course, exhortation and doctrine.

Public acts of the public office, more likely, but not exclusively, of course. He needs to be careful, even in his private reading of the Word of God, that he not handle it in a flippant manner, of course, or in private prayer time, or Bible studies, and the like. To exhortation, to encourage and the like.

And we'll hit each of those in a point here. But, on the flip side, there's a negative command here. I'm going to put these two together.

Till I come, give attention to XYZ, to reading the Word, exhortation and doctrine, and of course, by implication, any other thing that you're called to do as a pastor. But, do not neglect the gift that is in you. Lack of attention, lack of exercising it, that is a neglect.

There's a negative command. A public gift given to Timothy is recognized. That is, the office itself is a gift.

In Timothy's case, the prophecy was involved, so maybe it was a personal gift as well. We read in verse 14, that is in you, the gift that is in you, which was given to you by the prophecy with the laying on of hands of the presbytery. So, two things are happening here.

It's extraordinary and ordinary. The extraordinary part is a prophecy given to him, because often the word prophecy means just that, not just teaching. The Puritans like to use the word sometimes, prophesying in 1 Corinthians 14.

They take that to mean teaching from the Word of God. But here, more than likely, it's something extraordinary. But something ordinary is going on as well.

It wasn't just, well, the Spirit of God and a prophet has spoken his word over you, and you have the gifts to exercise said office, a pastor, but also laying on of hands of the presbytery. That's an ordinary act. There's nothing special or magical about that.

In fact-- [audio silent from 18:28 to 21:35] --doctrines in the Bible, and you probably already know this. Law and gospel. The law is there.

You must teach this law to warn people from foolish life choices, to guide them down the path of righteousness, to convict of sin, the violation of God's holy law, and like such things. Teaching the gospel, of course. The wonderful news that guilty sinners who violated that law can and will be saved if they repent and believe in Jesus Christ.

If they follow him all the days of their life. Both things must be taught and preached in the ministry. True teachings of the doctrine of the New Testament and the Old Testament.

To meditate. I just shortly went over verse 14, because I'm going to do a sermon on it. Let's go to verse 15.

Meditate on these things. Give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Meditate to what? Carefully think over.

Does that sound familiar? Like pay attention? Pay careful attention? See? Encourage the young pastor to reflect upon his gifts. And part of the gifts, of course, would be exercise in the ability to read, to exhort, to teach doctrine. Not just the office in general.

The office itself, again, I would argue, is itself a gift. A gift to the church, as we see in Ephesians 4, for example. But whatever this may be, it's all things involved here in meditating on these things.

The good things God has equipped you as a young pastor here to be good, a useful tool in God's kingdom for his people. And it's given by the Spirit of God, of course. That God has blessed him with these things, with these gifts, to do these things before his people, to help them that they may grow thereby.

To give themselves wholly to this means what? Give yourself entirely to them. To what God has given you as a young pastor. And, of course, in your case, you're not a young pastor.

You're not an old pastor. You're not a pastor at all. But you have gifts.

The Spirit of God has blessed you so that you can do and avoid certain things in life. And you too must, what? Therefore, give yourself entirely to them. Whatever calling or vocation you have in life is what they used to call it.

As a husband, as a wife, as a child, as a single, as married. Whatever it is, do it heartily as unto the Lord and do it well in his presence, my God's Spirit upon you. And this too is given to Timothy.

If it's true for all of us, and indeed it is, it's all the more true for public officers because the world watches us. Everyone is called to work in the Lord's vineyard. And to what? Give attention to God's Word.

You may certainly not going to have opportunities often to exhort people, but you could do it once in a while in your own private capacity. Teach them some truth and get the Bible verses out, the catechism and the like. But you want to do it, of course, carefully.

And you want to meditate upon these things, the truth of God's Word, so that you can be effectual. It doesn't just fall out of the sky. Pastors don't just become pastors because they wake up one day and God has gifted them.

And it took no hard work. It took lots of work. It took years of work.

And in some ways it was harder today than it was back then because what? The apostles, maybe you never thought about it this way, the apostles already spoke those languages. It was easy for them. They already knew the history.

They grew up with Old Testament history. Think about that. I didn't.

I had to learn all this stuff in a condensed period of time. It just flows right out of them. So in many ways it's even harder today than it was back then.

I'm not looking for sympathy. I'm just pointing out the interesting contrast there. Either way, God has blessed us with the ability to learn these things as pastors, and that's the kind of pastor that you want, where he was blessed by God's providence in this regard.

To pray and work to this end that whatever responsibility that you have will be fulfilled by God's gifts and graces upon you by the power of the Holy Spirit within us, that your progress may become evident to all, that your progress may become evident to all. It's not going to be hidden in a corner or under a bush, right? Let your light shine before the world, and that's doubly so for public officers. You can't help where you are.

This is where God put you, and people aren't going to see much of what you do, but they're watching me on YouTube and Facebook and whatnot and hearing the words that I have or I don't have. So you need to pray for the pastors. Pray for yourself as well, that we can therefore see the progress being made in sanctification in our lives and the lives of our pastors, that he's working through us and in these matters.

And it reminds us that you can see some progress, spiritually speaking, and therefore should be what? An encouragement to us. I covered that in Sunday school class. Sunday school class is sanctification.

I keep referencing that in every sermon apparently because sanctification is there everywhere we walk as a Christian, that you can progress. He wouldn't say this if he didn't think Timothy could progress in his ministry. Think about that.

## **Example of Sanctification**

And you too as well, brothers and sisters. Lastly, an example of sanctification. Not just in word and in deed, not just in the gifts specifically for the office of the ministry and the middle verses, but here at the end for sanctification.

Take heed, verse 16, to yourselves and to the doctrine. Continue in them. Take heed.

Church leaders are examples. It means they need to be doubly cautious in their life and the doctrine. And what does take heed sound like to you again? Oh, that's right.

Pay attention or meditate. Look carefully upon. Think that's kind of important for pastors? Of course it is.

And that's why in our tradition, Christian tradition, the Presbyterian Reformed traditions, we are very serious about well-trained ministers who do their homework, like we say, and pay attention to the little things in the Word of God. That's their job. You can't.

Of course, I'm going to urge you, you too should meditate upon the Word of God, meditate on the Psalms, of course, and take heed to yourselves and to doctrine, to the teaching that you've been taught. Is it true? Is it not true? I can't do it all for you. You should just simply take my word for it.

That's called implicit faith. That's what the Roman Catholic Church taught. Don't worry about having to read the Bible.

We'll just keep it in Latin. It's very holy and special. Just take our word for it.

Trust us. Now, be good Bereans, right? But don't put too much of a burden upon yourself. You're not a pastor.

You're not called to simply sit there and read and pray and study. That's what pastors are called to do. And, of course, go beyond that, take it and feed God's people and give them advice and direct them away from dangers and the like and encourage them.

But you can, in your own way, meditate and pay attention to the extent that you're able. So, brothers and sisters, we read here at the end that all of us, of course, not just pastors, should take heed to ourselves, to pay attention to our Christian walk, and to continue. That is, to persevere, in his case, continue in them, in his office and his gifts that God has blessed him with.

Because Christians are, what, watching him and paying attention. When pastors fail, when pastors apostatize, it's very discouraging. And it can destroy an entire church, a local church.

Because we don't do it intuitively. You're an example. Pastors are an example.

What's going on here? Both by age and time as a Christian, it can discourage the youth in particular. They grow up and they're like, what in the world? What happened to this church? I thought this guy was a godly man. He was teaching me, by his example and by his word, what it means to follow Jesus.

And here he is, running off with the secretary or whatever. So you need to pray for the presbyteries and the churches to filter out such men. We can't be perfect about it.

But you can be very sloppy. I've seen it. And we should not be.

We should take this seriously. If his calling, and it indeed is, is to three times over pay attention, meditate, take heed to what God has given you, to his word, to everything, what it means privately and publicly to be a church pastor. All the more, should the presbytery pay attention to said things.

And the churches, when they pick a pastor. And of course, they should work together, the local church and the presbytery. Let's check this guy out.

We don't know who he is. And it's hard. It's doubly hard in our day and age because the pastor doesn't come from your own ranks.

You're blessed in this church. It sounds awful when I say this because I'm your pastor, but you knew me. Some of you didn't.

You come later. But I've been here since 1995. And this church picked me.

They're like, we know this guy. He's been around the block. We've seen him for a number of years.

That seems to me to be optimal and prime. But we don't have that. Many, many churches simply don't get that.

You get a guy from seminary from out of state. And that's hard. I've seen it in our presbytery.

The guy's there for a few years. It doesn't work out. It doesn't mesh with the people.

Not always his fault. Not always the pastor's fault. Simply there is a meshing thing going on here.

I think I'm going to talk about that sanctification because you have different cultures and whatnot. So pray for them. Pray for the pastors.

Pray for the churches that they try to get and guard and help the pastors do the best they can. Pray, brothers and sisters, for godly examples for us to follow, especially in church leadership. And work to that end through teaching others this word, that this is what we expect from our pastors.

And you should expect that from your church as well, brother. I'm here to help you. And we're here to help one another, that God may continue to raise up faithful men to be godly examples to the brethren.

Let us pray. Spirit of truth and life, continue to be with us, we pray, not only our church, but our presbytery and our denomination, God Almighty, that we would have men who are called, Lord, not by a sense of feeling, simply and only, but, God, because they have shown the gifts of what it means to be a pastor. And although there's certainly a variation of degree and practice in these matters, Lord, but it should be obvious to a bunch of men called presbytery and the local church as well.

Be with these men, God Almighty, we pray, whether they are young or old, to stand firm, to take heed, to meditate upon these truths and these gifts that you've given them, Lord, that they may show the progress, we pray and ask, in their Christian walk before the world, but especially before the saints, that they may, by these things, be encouraged to walk in the light of your word, we pray. Amen.