

In this portion of the letter the Apostle Paul focuses on Timothy's role as a pastor.

What is a real pastor, as compared to, let's say, a professional clergyman for whom it's just a job, or a religious "bunkshooter"?

*Carl Sandburg wrote, 'I don't want a lot of gab from a bunkshooter in my religion. I won't take my religion from any man who never works except with his mouth . . .' (To a Contemporary Bunkshooter).*

There's a wide range of opinions about pastors.

Put four Christians together, and you'll probably get five different opinions of what a pastor ought to be.

How can a pastor ever hope to be effective if he looks out on a congregation that has differing opinions about what he's supposed to be and to do? The poor guy's dead meat!

The only way a pastor can be effective is if he and the whole congregation adopt the Scriptures as the divine and final authority for clarifying his role as a pastor—and if the elders of the church nip in the bud any promotion of other notions

- When a church is seeking a pastor, as Crossroads Church is, the big, basic question is "What kind of a pastor are we looking for?"

Every church has its unique "ethos" or distinctive character.

A pastor that is right for one church may not be the right pastor for another church.

That's why it's essential to pray for the Lord's guidance in leading you to the pastor he has chosen.

- For several months we've been studying a letter from the Apostle Paul to Timothy, who was the first century counterpart of a pastor today.

Unfortunately, some congregations ignore what God's Word says about this important matter.

They want a pastor who is a religious celebrity, or a champion of their social or political agenda, or the CEO of their large ecclesiastical enterprise. And then there are pastors want to be lord of their own fiefdoms.

In the light of God's Word, that is all unvarnished stupidity!

- Today let see how the Apostle Paul cuts through such witless tripe.

11. *Command and teach these things.*

12. *Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.*

13. *Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.*

14. *Do not neglect the gift which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.*

15. *Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.*

16. *Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

In 1 Timothy 4:11-16 the Apostle Paul describes some **distinguishing marks** of a real pastor. These are just as current as tomorrow's newspaper.

### **I. A REAL PASTOR COMMANDS RESPECT.**

### **1 Timothy 4:11-12**

If a congregation is united in the conviction that a particular candidate has been called by God to be its pastor, then he is worthy of the people's respect.

This is important: it means no one in the church has the right to withhold that respect and say, *He will have to earn my respect.*

Please understand that this is not my opinion. It's from God's word, as we'll see.

The way the Apostle Paul put it, a pastor commands respect from everyone. That's biblical.

There is no way a pastor can serve effectively if church members cop an attitude that says, *I dare you to try to get me to trust you.*

If he's your pastor God says you must respect him, unless he clearly violates a standard set out in God's Word. This is also an enormous weight upon a pastor's shoulders. He dare not betray this trust that is enjoined by the word of God.

- I have known some church folk who would choke on what I just said. It would curl the corners of their soul, because they know of renegade pastors who betrayed the trust placed in them by a church.

Some churches have been ruined by power-hungry pastors who don't care for the flock. There are jerks who have no right to be pastors.

The Puritan pastor Richard Baxter wrote: *'Oh, how curiously I have heard some men preach, and how carelessly I have seen them live!'* (*The Reformed Pastor*)

- This is why your Search Team must employ an intense vetting process with all potential candidates. That's why we must pray fervently for God's guidance and wisdom.

This is also why a pastor must commit to a close accountability relationship with the church's elders, to confront him if he ever violates the clear standards of God's word for pastors and elders.

- Paul knew there was something about Timothy that might cause some church folk not to respect him.

The Apostle Paul was adamant about this. Timothy was the shepherd of God's flock, and not even his youth was an excuse for anyone to withhold proper respect.

Christians who refuse to respect their pastor without biblical support will have to give account to God for their actions. That's not a trifling matter.

God doesn't look the other way when people attack a shepherd of his flock. There will be accountability

- I have been a pastor for over 36 years, and I confess that I never before said these things to a congregation of which I was the permanent senior pastor. It's one of the hardest things for a pastor to say to his own church family.

It's probably something the elders of the church should say to the church family every year. It should be said!

But I have the privilege of helping you prepare for your new pastor. So it's imperative that I say these things.

By the way, I have been here long enough to see that Crossroads is a church that loves and respects its pastors.

Paul had also told the Elders from Ephesus, where Timothy was now the pastor, to be on their guard, because even in a healthy church people will rise up to cause trouble and division (Acts 20:28-31)

- Treating a pastor with respect doesn't mean placing him high on a pedestal. Pastors don't belong on pedestals. They are fallible mortals, just like all of us. They belong on their knees.

There's a story about a little old lady. (Have you noticed it's always a little old lady; I'm still waiting for a story about a large young lady) . . . anyway, she was saying good-bye to the pastor who was leaving. She said, *'I'm sorry to see you go. I never knew what sin was until you came here.'*

There was probably a better way to state it, but she showed real respect to a real pastor. He did not shrink for declaring biblical truth.

- A real pastor has a divine commission. When a pastor receives his certificate of ordination, it means godly leaders have watched his life and have tested him in all aspects of doctrine and pastoral ministry.

They place their hands on him, recognizing that he has been set aside by God for the huge responsibility of being a shepherd of *the church of God which he bought with his own blood* (Acts 20:28).

- So now let us take a look at how Paul tells Timothy to command respect:

11. *Command and teach these things.*

Which things? Everything Paul has written in this letter.

In Chapter 1 verse 3 Paul told Timothy to command certain people there to stop teaching false doctrine.

A pastor has the right and the responsibility before God to say hard things when necessary, for the sake of protecting God's flock.

Robert Franklin said, *'When you're the watch-dog, you earn and keep respect by barking.'*

- This is not an issue of personal authority. Nobody in the church wields personal authority. We are all under Christ's authority. But pastors have a huge responsibility for which they are accountable.

A real pastor is not a *'control-freak.'*

There is no room for an authoritarian attitude in a pastor of Christ's church.

A real pastor doesn't "throw his weight around." It's the weight of God's Word that he wields. God's commands of his people are often heavy.

- A pastor has the responsibility to make sure that God's people obey God's commands. Nothing more and nothing less!

A real pastor is not afraid of people's reactions to God's commands.

That's why Paul says to the pastor, *'Command and teach these things.'*

12. *Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.*

How old was Timothy? The term is *neotés*. It could mean an adult up to the age of 40.

Perhaps it was his relative youth in comparison with Paul. Maybe in Ephesus he was still considered young.

There's a saying, *'If you live long enough the venerability factor creeps in; . . . you get accused of things you never did, and . . . credited with virtues you never had.'* (I.F.Stone)

I have officiated at the funerals of a few scoundrels in my time. Some relative stands up to give a glowing tribute in memory of the deceased, and I have to glance over at the casket to make sure I'm at the right funeral. That's undeserved respect.

Paul was Pastor Timothy's mentor, and he was adamant about this matter of commanding respect: *Make sure the people respect you as a pastor, in spite of your youth.*

- Then Paul lists five areas in which it is a pastor's responsibility to be an example (v.12): *in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.*

Further along in this letter (6:11) he repeats this *'But as for you, O man of God . . . Pursue righteousness,*

*godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness.*

1. The pastor's *speech* should always be true and honorable and gracious.

Robert Fulghum wrote, *Sticks and stones may break our bones but words will break our hearts.* (*All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten.*)

2. The pastor's *life* should be irreproachable. He should practice what he professes, and not be a hypocrite.

3. Jesus said his followers should be recognizable because of their *love* for one another.

A pastor should be an example to the church of this kind of brotherly love.

4. A pastor is an example of *faith*. This is not just faith in Christ for salvation. It includes being faithful, remaining true to the Christian faith in all respects.

5. A pastor must be an example of *purity* for the church.

The Ephesian Christians desperately needed a model of godliness who would remain pure in the debauched culture of Ephesus.

This is clearly just as big an issue today. Too many pastors have fallen dramatically and tragically because they failed in personal purity.

- Paul told Timothy to command respect from the members of the church. He also emphasized what a congregation should expect from its pastor.

It goes both ways.

Pastors don't command respect just because they have the title of 'Pastor.' They must live up to it.

## **II. A REAL PASTOR COMMUNICATES TRUTH. 1 Timothy 4:13, 14**

Now Paul focuses on a pastor's main agenda—in any church.

13. *Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.*

14. *Do not neglect the gift which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.*

If there is one thing a church should grasp and never let go of concerning a pastor it's this: a pastor's life and ministry in the church revolve around the Word of God.

This is central. A real pastor is not the CEO of a corporation or the manager of a business.

- Paul explains this devotion to God's Word under three headings:

1. The '*reading.*' This is the reading of the Holy Scriptures aloud in the services when the church is gathered.

This included the apostolic letters and later the gospels.

People did not have personal copies of the Old Testament or the apostles' letters, or the gospels.

Many of the people were illiterate. Some of the church members were household slaves

That's why Scripture had to be read publicly.

The early Christians had to listen to the God's Word, and remember it.

In the first century church the Christians applied their minds to the Word of God more than most Christians do today.

2. *Preaching/exhortation (paraklésis).* It means encouraging the people based upon the reading of the Scriptures.

It's urging them to obey and to apply the truths of God's word in their lives. It's basically preaching.

It also means giving stern warning against error in doctrine and against immoral behavior.

3. The *teaching.* (*didaskalia*).

Earlier in this letter Paul said elders must be able to teach (3:2). How much more the one who is to be an example to the church, the pastor Timothy?

Christians must know God's word. Biblical illiteracy is dangerous. Biblical doctrine is of immense importance to a church.

False teaching comes into a church and flourishes if the church members don't know God's Word well enough to recognize error.

- What about prayer? Prayer is not mentioned here, but it is in Chapter. 2.

Prayer is a spiritual exercise of people who know and obey God's Word. Otherwise praying is mere idleness.

- In verse 14 Paul adds: *Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.*

The gift was the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher.

Eloquence, education, charm do not a real pastor make.

A real pastor accepts the responsibility to cultivate and develop the pastoral gift given by the Holy Spirit. He must never neglect it.

- Timothy's spiritual gift was recognized by the elders. It was attested '*through prophecy when the elders laid hands on you.*' Paul refers to this on two other occasions—in 1:18 and in 2 Timothy 1:6.

When a pastor is ordained, we affirm this gift of the Holy Spirit to serve as a pastor.

A pastor must never neglect this spiritual gift that gives prominence to the authoritative word of God.

### III. A REAL PASTOR CONTROLS HIMSELF.

1 Timothy 4:15, 16

A real pastor is careful to keep his life under control.

He should give people no reason to be suspicious of his motives or of his morality.

15. *Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.*

It should be obvious to everyone that the pastor is passionately committed to preaching and teaching the Word of God.

It should also be clear that if a congregation is to grow and advance spiritually, their pastor is a worthy example to follow.

When Menachem Begin was prime minister of Israel he said, *When entering a battle, there are two words no Israeli leader will ever use: "Forward March!" Instead the soldiers hear, "Follow Me!" Israeli troops are not sent into battle—they are led there.*

Pastors must be spiritual leaders like that.

16. *Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

A pastor must be especially vigilant in two areas:

- 1. *Watch your life. Literally, take heed to yourself.* This is about the pastor's personal life; his character and his integrity.

There's a story about St. Francis Assisi being met one day by a peasant who asked him very respectfully, 'Are you Francis of Assisi?' 'Yes I am.' Then the peasant gave this admonition to the holy man, 'Be careful Sir that you be as good as people say you are!'

This is Paul's counsel to Timothy and to all pastors. Make sure your standards are high so that you are as good, or better than what people say you are.

2. *Watch the doctrine* (the teaching). Again the emphasis is on the truth of God's Word.

George MacDonald wrote in one of his pastoral novels, 'Nothing is so deadening to the divine as a habitual dealing with the outsides of holy things.' (*The Curate's Awakening*, p. 176)

A pastor must never become so accustomed to his ministry that he just slips into auto pilot or cruise control.

Paul says to pastors: *Persist in this, for by doing so you will save both yourself and your hearers.* (v.16)

The danger of neglecting one's own salvation is serious. Even the apostle Paul was vigilant about his own life, lest after preaching to others he miss the mark (1 Corinthians 9:27)

- While he is watching over God's church, the pastor must keep an eye on himself. A character flaw can ruin a pastor.

Until Christ returns these are the marks of a pastor that matter most in the church.

1. *A real pastor commands respect by his integrity, by his example.*
2. *A real pastor devotes himself to communicating the truth of God's Word.*
3. *A real pastor demonstrates that he has control of himself by the way he lives and by the way he teaches.*