

A Noble Servant's Focus for Ministry: Pure Doctrine

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[0 : 01] Well, I seem to not be able to let go of this song, O Church, Arise. I'm going to use it again to encourage our hearts.

The song captures the message for this morning with this phrase, and with the sword that makes the wounded whole. So what's the sword? The Word of God?

The Word of the Lord makes the wounded soul, the captive soul, free, whole. And so you would think, well, given that truth that Scripture clearly teaches, all evangelical churches adhere to a strong commitment to the truth and to preach and teach the Word of God in every venue they can create as they gather together, right?

Is that I'm getting some dubious looks? You know, we know better, and it's something we pray about, and it's something that we are on guard about in our own fellowship, lest we too are deceived by Satan and the allurements of the world to be a people who chase fads and those kinds of things.

Well, this morning, as we continue in this series of expositions that I want to do through 1 Timothy 4, we're going to talk about...

[1 : 29] Oh, I lost it all. There it is. A noble servant's focus for ministry. Last week it was foundation. This week it's a focus for doing ministry together as the church.

Now, as we turn to 1 Timothy, if you're not already there, I understand this is a section of Scripture, the entire letter, in fact, is written to Pastor Timothy who is serving as a shepherd, the preaching and teaching pastor in the city of Ephesus, the Ephesian church.

And Paul's given him some specific direction about how to be a pastor, how to be a minister, how to face down false teaching. That's a main concern in the context of this letter. But the entire letter is about Timothy doing this with the support of the congregation.

So the people have to understand Timothy's role. So this letter will be read among the people. They'll study it together. They'll talk about it. They'll take it apart. So that the congregation can own the role of shepherding, particularly as it bears on preaching and teaching the gospel, preaching and teaching the truth of the Lord.

The congregation needs to know how to support their pastors in the role that they've been given in Scripture to minister Scripture to one another. Now, let's read the text together, and then I'll jump back into somewhat of an introduction here for you.

[2 : 53] 1 Timothy 4. I'll read from verse 1 today. Last week I didn't do that, but I want you to see more of the context of what he's talking about with these things in verse 6.

But the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, explicitly says that in later times, all right, that's us. The later times are the times after the cross. That in later times some will fall away from the faith because they'll be paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.

That happens in the church. By the hypocrisy of liars. These are men. These are human beings who have been seared in their own conscience.

These are men who then have come to forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God created to be shared in with thanksgiving. By those who believe and know the truth.

For everything created by God is good. Nothing is to be rejected for it is received with thanksgiving. It is sanctified, notice, by the word of God in prayer.

[3 : 54] Notice how many times the word of God is mentioned here in these first five verses as a counter to these lies. As a counter to what these other men who are in the church and in leadership and Ephesus are saying to the congregation.

Paul is saying, Timothy, you've got to get this thing corrected. These men are putting rules and regulations on God's people that have nothing to do with what Scripture says. And it's locking them up in their faith.

It's eroding their faith. Now notice in verse 6, this is where we were last Sunday, in pointing out these things, these things. To the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being nourished on the words of the faith, and of the sound doctrine which you've been following.

But refuse myths fit only for old women. On the other hand, train yourself for the purpose of godliness. And what I've done in my Bible is I've drawn lines, is I've circled good servant, I've circled sound doctrine, and I've circled godliness in those two verses, and I've drawn lines between them.

Because a good servant will minister sound doctrine for the purpose of godliness. And I don't need to forget that. That needs to be at the forefront of my mind in all that I am and do as a pastor, as a husband, as a friend.

[5 : 16] Verse 8, For bodily training is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life, and also for the life to come. It, it, verse 8, is a trustworthy saying and deserving full acceptance.

For it is for this, this being godliness, in verse 10, this is godliness, for it is for godliness we labor and strive, because we fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

Now, that's where we left off last week. This morning, we'll pick it up, verse 11. Command and teach these things. That's it. That's the verse for today.

Command and teach these things. Now, let me draw your attention to what I'm going to offer you in the way of a couple of true things going on here.

Some of you have your own true stories about bad church experiences. Look, if you've lived in the Lord long enough, you've all had some type of interaction in a church, quote unquote, where you've seen some hard things, maybe heard some hard things, witnessed some bad things, right?

[6 : 28] That's part of the reality of being on the earth and being part of the church where we are made up of sinners who are trying to live for Christ. But not everybody in the church is safe. You understand that?

Paul here is dealing with men who are most likely not in the faith because they're not dealing with the word faithfully. So Paul is coming up against men who are in the leadership in the church in Ephesus that are likely not in Christ.

How about that? It happens. Most of you understand how a lack of priority on teaching and living out the truths of Scripture negatively impacted your life and the church's life in context where you saw some bad things happen in the church.

Most of us have that. And I dare say, look now, based on my experiences over the last 30 years, some of you have encountered some bad experiences in church life and perhaps you didn't know at the time that at the foundation of that trouble, whatever it was, whatever it was in the past, there was a lack of focus and application of sound doctrine to that particular context of church life at that time.

You might not have put those together, that whatever this was that you're thinking about now actually had its foundation in a lack of sound doctrine, in a lack of application of truth to the context of church life.

[7 : 57] I know that happened to me. In my early, early ministry, in my first staff position, I didn't have any role like this. I was the counselor, the family life minister.

My job was to minister to the families, do a lot of counseling. I was doing over 40 hours of counseling a week. And it was just me doing that. But in that first time, I wasn't prepared to understand from the scriptures how a lack of the application of scripture truth to the context of church life was eroding our church life.

And we were seeing all kinds of issues crop up. I didn't make that connection right away. You would think a guy getting out of seminary would be able to easily do that. Well, it wasn't easy for me.

I had to grow in that. I had to look back on those experiences and measure those and try to understand it. Let me share just really briefly one of my true stories with you.

I want to share this just to help us grasp more of the reality, the reality of each New Testament church's need for a shared focus and a shared commitment to sound, pure doctrine in the life of the church.

[9 : 10] Say, Jeff, before we go any further, what do you mean when you say doctrine? Doctrine has to do with teachings, teachings. So you, look, people out there in the world, they're constantly giving themselves over to doctrine every day, whether they realize it or not, because the world teaches us.

The world teaches us how to think, believe, live, how to prioritize, how to use the resources of our lives, how to think about trials and troubles in our life, right?

There's no shortage of that. So doctrines concern beliefs and teachings that we live by. So the doctrines of the Bible are the teachings of the Bible that we take in and help us understand how to walk with God.

That's what we're talking about in doctrine. I want to share with you this story just to help us better understand the shared commitment and focus we need to have together on this and how it impacts church life.

There was a time in my church life I was called to a small church situation and this church was dying.

[10 : 19] It had been a happening church prior to this. Lots of people and some things had happened within the staff and the pastor had left and it was a cloud of controversy and lots of people were hurt and most of the people in the church had left.

Most of the people had been seminary families because we were living about 16 miles from a seminary at the time where I was attending.

So there I am, the new pastor and within a couple of months of preaching and teaching and trying to help them get used to my rhythm and who I was and all, there were a contingent of people in the church who were very disgruntled.

They had been the holdouts. They felt very disenfranchised. I won't go into all that. I'm just letting you know a little bit of the background. And so a couple of the men caught me after the service one Sunday.

Can we talk to you? I said, sure. We went back into my office and by that time, I knew better than to do things like that by myself. So I grabbed one of the young men who was on the search team who brought me to the church.

[11 : 29] He was in seminary at the time and very sharp young man. God willing, you're going to get to meet this guy in May. I think they're going to come up here and visit and we're going to have some time with them.

They're going to be here at the church and I'll introduce you to him. His name is Brennan. So I grabbed Brennan. Hey, Brennan, come with me. These guys want to talk to me. I have no idea what I'm walking into. So we go into my office and to make a long story short, they say to me, we, he and I, these two men, we are going to institute ourselves as deacons in the church.

That's what I did. I went. That's the face he's making. I said, okay. They told me the story. We've been deacons in the past. We haven't been active deacons for some time now, but we're going to reactivate ourselves to become deacons.

And of course, you could see through this a mile away. And so I looked right at him and I said, and would this by any chance have anything to do with you guys making sure that you keep an eye on me and put me on a leash?

And they said, absolutely. They didn't even try to deny it. I said, okay. Before you go any further, will you guys allow me to sit down with you and show you in the scriptures where what you're saying to me right now and wanting to do is unbiblical and ungodly and unworthy of the Lord Jesus?

[12 : 55] And they said, no. And Brennan came unglued. I literally had to step between him and do this because he came right up to them and he said, he started to say something and I did this and I just looked at him.

And so the finger went down and he said, did you hear what your pastor said to you? He asked you if you would allow him to sit down with you and show you where what you're about to do is sin and against God and the church, you know, something that would affect.

We heard him. Well, the end result of all of that was the next Sunday I resigned. And the reason I resigned was because I didn't have the support of the people who were being looked to in the congregation as leadership.

The two young men who were on the search committee who brought me had been looked at as leaders. That's why they were being asked to do what they did in interviewing me and doing all that, vetting me.

But no longer. They were looked at as being in cahoots with me. We never did really find out what the cahoots thing was all about because there was no agenda beyond preaching and teaching. I can't ruin it that fast, Greg.

[14 : 15] Two months. I mean, come on. I'm not even that good. But nevertheless, that's where it ended up. We asked one of the denominational leaders, our state representative for our denomination, to sit in on my resignation for fear that it was going to be riotous.

We really were concerned it was going to be physical. And so I preached my sermon. Then I read my resignation letter. I knew better than to try to ad-lib that.

And in my resignation letter, I recounted the story of what those men said. And I told them, I can't minister at a church and be effective at a church if the people don't want to hear the truth. That's all I have.

I don't have anything else to give you. There's nothing within me that's going to bless you and build you as God's people. So you've hand-strung me, and I don't have a choice.

I hate it because I've got nowhere to go. I just moved here. Everything about my life's here kind of thing. That denominational leader looked like he was going to weep. He called me.

[15 : 20] I had gotten home after the service. They had met for a while. He called me and he said, I have been in this denomination and doing this job for many, many years. I have never, ever in my life seen a worse display of Baptist polity ever.

And I cannot believe that those men refused you in teaching and preaching the truth of God. But that's exactly what happened. Now, I tell you that story. Does that shock you a little bit?

It should. There are a few in here. It doesn't shock. That's because they're more seasoned. That happens. That happens.

That goes on in the church. What I'm bringing to you in 1 Timothy right now, it was happening in Ephesus with Timothy all these years ago.

2,000 years ago, this was the kind of thing going on. And this is what Timothy as a young pastor was facing. I didn't have a Paul. You know, I went to Paul and read Paul, but I didn't have a physical Paul in my life.

[16 : 25] Those two young men were looking to me to lead. And now I'm saying, I have no one to lead. And I have nothing to offer apart from the truth.

And this is what I offer you. I know that this is why you're here. You guys come every Sunday because you love each other and you want to hear the word of God. And Greg and I are committed to give that to you to the best of our ability.

You pray for us and our weakness because we're just men and we want to rightly handle the word of truth. Now, the question then comes, why should you be supremely concerned for and committed to having your family in a church that puts the highest priority on teaching and living sound doctrine?

Because God has told us that we are to grow together in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and we can't grow together in that grace and knowledge apart from the truth, can we?

This is where we go to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. I totally understand how basic that sounds. We will never stop teaching that basic reality.

[17 : 49] We will always, always seek to help you be founded in, grounded in, and focused on our need for the truth.

Every day, all day, all week long, and on the Lord's Day. We preach and teach sound doctrine so that we know God's mind on the matters of life.

You're not interested in knowing my mind on the matters of life. You need Jesus' mind. That's who you're following. You're not following me. You're following Christ. As you guys follow Greg and I, it's only because you see us following Jesus.

And we understand that. That's a good thing. You and I, and as a church, we all grow in sound doctrine to please Jesus. That's why.

We want to be His holy servants in all the issues of life. Whenever we face things, whatever we face, we want to face it in the holiness of Jesus and bring glory to Him. And God help us, we fail.

[18 : 53] And we run to the cross and we ask for grace. We minister to each other. We pick each other up. We bear each other's burdens. We weep together and laugh together and share together.

Last Sunday, I addressed the issue of a noble servant's foundation for ministry in 1 Timothy 4. And I did 6 through 10 that we just read.

Now in that sermon, I gave you five elements in that foundation of a noble servant's ministry. And I want to put those up here just to remind you from last week. Teach, feed, reject, pursue, labor, all in the truth.

All in the truth. Today, we're going to get a start at moving from that foundation that I have up here for ministry to maintaining a biblical, biblical, godly focus for ministry.

So we're planted on the foundation of the truth and now we're moving forward in what will be our focus from that foundation. How do we focus ourselves and bring ourselves together as a church family to keep the main thing the main thing?

[20 : 05] So we'll get a start to it this morning and I'm going to deal over the course of the next few weeks with six priorities that help us do that. Six priorities from scripture that help us maintain a godly focus in our service to others in the life of our church because that's what Paul's dealing with with Timothy.

Timothy, be a faithful servant. Serve these people well as you serve the truth. Help them understand how they can come together to support that effort in making the truth the main thing because the truth helps us grow in the knowledge, the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So these ministry priorities keep a pastor focused on his main mission in serving the local church. There may be a few of you who don't realize because you're young in the faith that the Bible itself tells us what a pastor's main focus in ministry should be week after week and what he needs to commit himself to and not allow himself to be distracted from.

Now that's the main context that we're dealing with in this letter. But here's the question that I want to put to you guys to think about. What do these priorities that I'm going to be talking about, these six things, have to do with each member of the church?

You. What is your responsibility to these ministry priorities in the life of our church? This is how we're going to approach this because again, I believe this is what Paul is concerned with as he talks to Timothy about this.

[21 : 42] Timothy, this isn't just for you. The people need to understand what I'm telling you to do in the way of your ministry because they need to support you in that. Now, while the pastors have their charge from the Lord to instruct and ensure that these remain the focus of the church's efforts in ministry to each other, as I'm saying, each member of the church family is to support these priorities.

Listen now. By the way he or she relates to the pastors, by how each person serves in the church family. Those are kind of the parallel tracks we're taking.

You need to know this because you need to understand how to support your pastors in the work that they're being commanded to do. And on a parallel track, you guys need to understand this because it has everything to do and bears on completely your service in the church.

Your service to each other in the ministry of the church. Parallel tracks that we're going to run on together as we talk about this. Let me clean that up just a little bit and show you what I mean in this little graphic thing here.

So as a member of Grace Church Williamsburg, you need to know these things that we're going to be talking about because, first of all, you need to have a biblical viewpoint and understanding about God's priorities for his pastors.

[23 : 05] We're not making this up. We're not making our own job description. We're taking it from Scripture. Particularly as we serve you in this way, you can support us in our work.

Secondly, you need to know how to apply these standards to your involvement and investment in God's church and to evaluate your ministry, your service based on God's priorities for that service.

So the first point I've got up here deals with your relationship to your pastors and their relationship to you. The second one concerns how you understand and approach your own involvement and investment in our church.

And then this third one speaks to the issue of the church family. You need to be able to encourage your brothers and sisters in Christ in their service to the church family.

as they serve the Lord based on His biblical priorities for involvement in the local church. I think you can begin to see that God's wisdom in this is keeping us literally on the same page.

[24 : 10] Keeping the main thing, the main thing together. Always helping each other evaluate what we're doing and why we're doing it as it relates to the main thing. How are we, the bottom line is this, how are we bringing God's truth into the arena of everyday life as a church family?

How is that truth affecting us and changing us? Growing us in the grace and knowledge of Jesus so that each one of us is becoming more like Christ as we minister to each other.

That's a powerful thing. I'm telling you, as the glue of love for Christ becomes more and more a part of who we are, it's going to be, nigh impossible for the world to pull that apart.

Why? Well, because you know that you've been forgiven much and so you're willing to forgive. It's a little bit hard for us to be really cranky and upset and petty with each other when we have a thankful, forgiving spirit toward each other because we know God, God, is forgiving toward us.

We're keeping the main thing and the main thing. That's how you fight it. You love Jesus well and you turn to love each other well. You're loved well by the Lord.

[25 : 31] It's certainly not His issue, is it? It's our issue. If that glue starts to, starts to, you know, do this, what's the word I'm looking for? What's that called?

There's a word for it in engineering. It'll come to me. Moving on, let's do this first element, this first deal that I told you I would do, this first priority.

We're only going to deal with one today and it's just from verse 11. It's a proper focus on the priority of pure doctrine. No surprise there. Pure doctrine. That's the title of my message. That's the focus that I want to talk about because that's what I think verse 11 calls us to.

Notice what he says in verse 11. Command and teach these things. That's it. Straightforward. No wiggle room. Command and teach these things.

Now, friends, these things are once again Paul telling Timothy to take up the matter of what Paul wants to define as these things.

[26 : 35] These things that relate to the things of God. Go back up into verse 6 with me, if you will. and just be reminded where Paul introduced this in pointing out these things to the brothers.

These things to the brothers. Verse 11 explicitly defines the emphasis and character of Timothy's ministry as a pastor in the local church.

Once again, let me say that again. Verse 11 explicitly defines the emphasis and the character of Timothy's ministry as a pastor as a pastor in the local church.

Timothy, if you're going to do anything faithfully in the church as a pastor, this is it. This is your primary duty before the Lord God as a pastor in the local church.

Command and teach these things. Can't get away from it. in verse 11, these things refer to the things of verses 6 through 10.

[27 : 40] So you just reflect on verses 6 through 10 real quickly. That's the specific emphasis of these things. But like the emphasis from verse 6 when Paul mentioned these things, it broadens to refer to the entire instruction of the letter.

Timothy, teach, command and teach these specific things that I'm laying out for you in this letter and what I just mentioned to you, these are the kinds of things you need to focus on.

And there's a really good reason why he's telling him that. These things refer only to the things that God had given Paul to say. These are God's things.

And so Paul is telling Timothy, minister these things. Because these are God's. Again, it just doesn't sound like rocket science. But boy, is it easy to get this wrong.

It's easy to trip. Do you know what pastors trip over most when they get this wrong and the main thing ceases to be the main thing?

[28 : 47] It's not a what, it's a who. Me. I trip up myself. Not you. I'm the problem. I am my biggest problem and enemy in this faithfulness.

Because it's so easy to get distracted on so many other things. This is why it's important for the church in its polity to understand deacons and a plurality of elders.

More than one. This is a shared ministry. It's why it's important for pastors to teach the congregation what it means for us to support each other in the main thing.

And this is what Paul is doing with Timothy now. These things. Only what God had given Paul to tell Timothy. Timothy then was not given license to invent things to say to God's people.

I am not up here to be a clown, an entertainer, or a philosopher, or whatever.

[29 : 51] That's not what we're about. Timothy was not to be that. Timothy was to carefully adhere to the teaching that Jesus Christ gave to Paul, and that Paul was now giving to Timothy, and that Timothy was to pass on just as faithfully as Paul had done.

You see the succession? Greg and I aren't apostles. We are under the apostles. We are under rowers, galley slaves, rowing.

We just take our baton and run our lap. It's our turn right now at Grace Church. So we take the baton and we run faithfully. At some point, whether I'm actually physically able to hand that off to the next guy and help y'all get the next guy, you know, because I've become too doty to do it anymore or whatever, that's fine.

I can do that. Or God may take me out and you guys find yourself looking for another pastor because God took me to heaven. And Greg steps in and says, okay, here's what we or whatever.

I've known an entire eldership to be taken out overnight. We were living in another state and one night got a phone call.

[31 : 02] A pastor of a local church, a very faithful man, a good and godly man with several kids. He was on his way home from an elders meeting at night and there was a tractor that was on the road where it shouldn't have been and it had a long extending boom with discs on it on either side and into his lane and he didn't see it and it killed him.

Just like that, gone. This can happen. We don't know what the Lord's going to do. We want to make sure that we are being faithful in the line of apostolic teaching.

We're not inventing it or reinventing it. We're just teaching what the apostles taught because that's what Jesus taught them and that's what they've passed down to us in scripture. Right? This is why we turn to the word of God.

I know we know this. So listen now. Timothy's most important task in ministry was the careful transmission of the pure words of God to God's people.

God's pastors are to take careful measure of their stewardship of the treasure of God's truth. That is a sobering thing. I told you last week I'll say it again. I just can't afford to let anything including my own self and sin and desire for ease and all the things I fight like you fight.

[32 : 28] I can't afford to let any of that draw me away from being faithful to transmit God's truth to God's people. The most important day of my life is Sunday morning.

The only thing second to that is it would be Saturday night. What I do on Saturday to make sure that Sunday is a day that I can stand in the pulpit and be energized and faithful in transmitting God's word.

But that's my calling isn't it? That's my life. It's not a burden. It's not a burden. It's just it's hard. But it's not some big heavy thing that sits on me like ooh.

Now look again there are several good reasons that I want to share with you for the churches. The churches careful focus on God's pure words in scripture. This is why all of us again need to be concerned that we are looking into God's word and dealing in a way that is skillful and hermeneutically sound but that we're nevertheless keeping our emphasis on the truth of the Lord.

Let me give you several of them. Several good reasons for this. The first only God's words are true about godliness. Everything that Paul's telling Timothy right now is aimed at helping him to help the people be like God.

[33 : 47] Godliness is godlikeness. You want to be like God. Conform to Jesus. Well look only God's words are true about that. Where are you going to go to learn about how to be godlike?

There's only one place. The truth God's words will help you live as a Christian. All right? And that's related. They're all related. Number two is similar. Only God's words can be trusted.

Only God's words are trustworthy to produce godliness. You're not going to get more godlike by going out in the world and adopting the world's standards. You don't want me to stand up here and preach marketing principles to you about how to be a godly church.

What do they know? You don't need me to tell you about business techniques to grow our church. The Lord's going to grow our church. That's up to him. Do you understand that the Lord can take this thing out tomorrow?

You could get an email in the middle of the week that says, you know, the Lord decided that this thing is shut down. It's done. He can do that. He's done it before. This is his church.

[34 : 51] You're his people. This is his ministry. We're just all trying to come together and be faithful in it. And then finally, the last one, related to both of them, only God's words can train us up in godliness.

us. Yeah, that's why we go to it. Now, the church at Ephesus was so spiritually anemic because of the false teaching.

But add to that this, false teaching can only be effective if it has an audience. False teaching and the church family's willingness to sit under it.

That's the problem. Look, we're always going to have false teachers. And the Bible tells us that we're always going to have a following who want to have their ears tickled by false teachers, right?

They're always going to be with us. But that's a problem. What if we didn't have people who were willing to sit under false teachers because they were so committed to the truth? The false teachers wouldn't have an audience.

[35 : 50] You'd take the air right out of their sails, wouldn't you? So here at Grace, we don't want to give them any oxygen. You come in here and you want to teach something that's contrary to the word, we're going to refuse, you're out the door.

It is that straightforward. It has happened before, it'll happen again. No nonsense. Hear me carefully. We will not allow the wolves to stay here once they've been identified.

The wolves will either become sheep or they'll be put in the road with no uncertainty. I don't have any patience with that. You don't play with that.

That's very dangerous. If the church was going to survive, the church at Ephesus was going to survive in faithful service to the Lord, they had to once again be strengthened by the true and trusted words of the Lord, taught by true and trusted servants of the Lord.

That's God's pattern. Now, why do so many churches today struggle with preaching and teaching these things, the things of God, the things that the apostles have handed down because they learned them from Jesus?

[37 : 03] Why do so many struggle with preaching and teaching God's sound doctrine? Why do so many Christians attend churches who flirt with and eventually adopt wholesale the ideas and fads and words of the world?

You've seen it. I've seen it. It's hard. You know people in your life right now. You know people in churches like that. I do too. Some of my family. Why is that the case?

Well, in relation to the context of our passage, the church has lost faith in these things. The sound, pure doctrines of Scripture written for our instruction.

They've lost faith in these things being the things God most desires for us as a church family. It's just so tempting to grab the flashy, eye-appealing candy of the world and bring it into the church and think you're going to be able to use that to help God out in some measure of church life.

It's prideful. It betrays a lack of trust in the sufficiency of Scripture. It's a host of things. Why do they do that?

[38 : 23] In abandoning God's pure doctrine, the church has abandoned its only hope for revival. There won't be any revival apart from the truth. So, friends, listen, our hearts cry must be, give me these things.

Amen? Give me these things. And then, help me. Help me. Walk along with me and help me own these things in my life and in my service to Jesus and others.

It's not just knowledge for knowledge's sake, it's knowledge for transformation, to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus, to be conformed to him. Now, if you want to know the bottom line, because I want to give it to you, if you want to know the bottom line as to why preachers and why churches make their focus in church life either a very weakened or anemic version of what we're talking about right now, or even abandon it altogether for something else and replace it, because I've seen that, I've actually been in a church like that, you need to consider and go only as far as the ways God says his preachers are to communicate these things.

In other words, I hope you understand what I'm saying. You want to know the bottom line of why churches don't adhere more to this and give their life to this, that kind of thing?

All you need to do is read verse 11 and you've got your answer. Now, we're going to do more with that as we work through the passage, but verse 11 gives you the answer. It's in the ways that God has told his pastors to communicate these things, and it is highly offensive to people who don't care about holiness, to people who come in and sit down and expect to be entertained.

[40 : 14] Jeff, this, come on, dude, I get maybe one day a week off. I've chosen to be here. The least you could do is make it entertaining. No. You're not going to make me do what I don't, you know, that kind of thing.

No. I'm going to do what the Lord says. And so I think there's an element to preaching and teaching the scripture that should be engaging. It should be interesting.

But a lot of that is what you bring to it as you have a heart for the truth. I can't give you that. I can do my best, but I can't give you a heart for the truth. The Lord has to do that.

So here's the answer to the question of why do churches do this? What's the bottom line? Again, it's in, the answer is in the way God's told us to communicate this. And let me put it up here and you'll see.

This is why more churches don't do this. This is what he says. Whoa. Command these things. There you go. Well, we don't like that.

[41 : 14] Command these things, Timothy. Can't I just work it out where I try to slip it in on them? Maybe I know.

Nope. This is a straightforward frontal assault on the lies and schemes of the devil and the flesh that people live in. The word for command is parangelo.

Generally, it means to give orders, to charge, to direct, to instruct, to command. I know it's kind of a broad range, but you can see a theme through that. Command is the same Greek word that's used in chapter one.

I want to take you there and show you. If you go to chapter one, verse three, this is how Timothy or Paul started the letter to Timothy. Look at verse three with me.

As I exhorted you when going to Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may command. That's our word. Command certain ones not to teach a different doctrine.

[42 : 14] He's got to face these false teachers and he has to command them to stop teaching false doctrine. Wow. He's a young man now. Timothy is a little intimidated by this.

If you look at verse five, the goal of our command, same word, you might have instruction. It's actually command. The goal of our command is love from a pure heart.

We looked at that recently. And then verse 18. This command I entrust to you. Same word. Paul is talking about a ministry of commanding the truth among God's people.

That's the idea. It's all in reference. All of that is in reference to Timothy's ministry of preaching and teaching God's truth. Now hear me in the local church.

In the local church. This is a letter written to a pastor of a local church. A church situated in a geographical area.

[43 : 19] A group of people gathered together just like you are today to hear the truth. To be shepherded by Timothy. That's the context. So.

In the context. Let me catch up. In the context of our passage where Paul is giving specific instruction to Timothy about his preaching and teaching.

Parangelo refers to the biblically authoritative instruction and commands given by God and upheld by pastors as they shepherd the church.

So please notice that it does not read that you are to receive and get under all the commands that pastors make on you give to you.

It doesn't say that. The context is telling us that you are to get under the commands that pastors give you which God commands. We are commanding what God commands.

[44 : 25] So there is a sense in which because you respect Greg and I you defer to our judgment. You defer to our wisdom. That is a beautiful thing.

You're teachable. We were in a meeting one time and the man who said this was is in our congregation this morning and we put some stuff out. We said what do you guys think?

And the first person that spoke up said well more importantly what do you and Greg think? Because what you guys think is is what's important about this. What's your take on it?

Something to that. That's a beautiful loving sentiment toward your pastors. But listen Greg and I don't have any more authority than you do to say things like you know what paint these walls green by next Sunday.

Make it happen folks get these walls green. That's what we want. All right. Get at it. We we don't we don't have any more authority than you do to do that. You could come and say that and I'm going to say yeah we're not doing that.

[45 : 24] I'm glad you like green but we're not painting these walls green. We're we're we're we're in the same boat in that way. The commanding that we do is the commanding of the word of God as God has commanded us.

Now I'll do more with this as we go. I just want to make sure you understand that this instruction that God is giving to Paul that Paul is passing on to Timothy that Timothy is to take to the people.

This instruction is God's own words commanding his people in holy living and serving. So what's at stake? What's at stake in obeying these commands within the local church is faithfulness and godliness among the people of that church.

It's our mission to make disciples in the love of the Lord Jesus Christ and we cannot do that apart from the truth. Can we? So we all need to be on that page together.

Now because of this Timothy was not suggesting he was not offering possibilities to choose from. He wasn't trying to gain a consensus and heard the cats in the same direction.

[46 : 30] Can't do it. He wasn't about sharing a few ideas. He wasn't about creating a feel good safe space. He wasn't about helping the people self-placate.

That is not preaching. That's not teaching. That's not pastoring. That's an abandonment of the ministry. It's an aberration. Biblical preaching is not a discussion.

It's not a dialogue. It is God speaking authoritatively through his human servant. It is so incumbent then upon the servant to make sure that he's speaking thus saith the Lord.

It is incumbent upon the people who are sitting under that ministry to recognize thus saith the Lord and get under it. There is no room here for cowardice in the servant or in the people.

There's no room for selfishness in the servant or the people. There's no room for personal agendas in the servant or the people. God's factoring all that out by pointing us to his word where he's already spoken.

[47 : 43] The dialogue's already taken place. Now our responsibility is to get under it. To humble ourselves in it. All of those things, selfishness, cowardice, agendas, those all obscure and discredit God's pure words and they end up robbing us.

They rob us of life in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works through the truth, you guys. So Timothy was under God's divine mandate.

I'll put this up here. Timothy was under God's divine mandate to command God's people to obey God in these things. Wow. Here's the way we'll bring that over.

God's preachers are in a service to God of commanding. We do this because we are ourselves commanded to command.

I have to command. I'm commanded to command. It's an issue of authority, faithfulness and obedience first and foremost to God. God help me if I don't command. I can't stand up here and mealy mouth.

[48 : 51] We're going to preach about sin. We're going to talk about the true doctrines of Scripture. We're going to cover, you know, each verse. We're not going to be skipping over stuff. We're going to deal with the hard stuff, the uncomfortable stuff.

The very nature of the message necessitates that it be preached in a commanding way. Why? Because God is the author. God is the author. The recipients are God's servants, his people, his blood-bought people, and the message itself will endure for all eternity.

But Paul doesn't stop there. In verse 11, if you go back with me, command these things. He says this, command and teach. We'll put that up there. Command and teach these things.

This is the second way that these things of God, these things are to be communicated. It's through the teaching of the things of God to the local church.

church. Now, when I end, you're going to see why the emphasis on the local church is so important in this matter of pure, sound doctrine and the church safeguarding the truth together as a family.

[50 : 04] You're going to see that in just in just a few minutes. The local church is the context for this being done. So this is this is not, again, about entertainment.

It's not a focus on a man-centered way or emphasis or approach to being the church, doing the church, thinking about no, none of that. In fact, commanding and teaching.

Listen, these two verbs are in the present tense form of the Greek. The present tense form here means that it's a continuing or ongoing action. So what Paul is telling Timothy and what he would have understood is this.

Continue commanding. Continue teaching. This is to be an ongoing, endless effort of the church family to be under the word and grow in it.

Continue to command. Continue to teach. Timothy, this is your calling. When in doubt, preach. That's the calling of the pastor. Whether it's one person or 1,000 people, when in doubt, stand up and start preaching.

[51 : 09] It's going to do one of two things. It's going to clear the room or it's going to draw people to Christ, right? So you're in a good way when you're doing that.

The teaching that's in view here is a systematic way of transmitting information from one source to another. It's just exactly what you think teaching is. It's not some big, hairy, weird Greek deal here.

It means exactly what it says. This is the bread and butter or the focus of pastoral ministry, teaching and preaching. We are about, Greg and I are about preaching, teaching and prayer.

That's what we're called to. That's the main bread and butter focus of who we are, what we do, why we're called. Teaching allows for the transmission of gospel truth.

So this is the way that we have today as we have received the truth of God to pass it down to those who are coming behind us.

[52 : 08] That's the pattern over thousands of years, isn't it? From the prophets and the apostles passing down the truth of the Lord. Sharing it with each other. And here again, folks, it is in the context of the local church family.

This is a pastor, Timothy, shepherding his family. Listen now, shepherding his people, knowing his people. These are my peeps.

I want to know them. I want to know when they're struggling. I want to know when they're crying. I want to know when they're rejoicing. I want to know when they're struggling. I want to know how they're tempted.

Why? Because I want to fight the enemy that wants to destroy them. Because I want to get between them and the one who wants to steal their souls, their joy, their life, their happiness, their kids.

Greg and I want to be those men. Why do we want that? Because God's put it in us. He's made us warriors of the truth. And we will not back down. This isn't bravado.

[53 : 14] This is commitment. This is years and years and years of God refining and standing forward to persevere in the truth of the Lord, to safeguard the people of God in the things of God.

These things, these precious things that Jesus gave his life for. You see, it's not a game for us. You being here is not a game. It's vital. It's vital.

Because your eternity is built on what you're doing here. Is that not true? That's what the scripture tells us. It's very, very, very important. Notice, notice again, the context of this teaching is for the local church.

Church, we, as a church, we have the privilege and responsibility to uphold these things among ourselves for God's greater glory. It isn't to showcase ourselves as brave or courageous or sacrificial.

It's for God's glory. Whatever it costs us. People have labored and stride. They've even died horrible deaths to preserve and pass on these things, these truths to us.

[54 : 25] And so now it's our turn. It's your turn. My turn. In the history of this truth, to faithfully guard it and to pass it on intact to the next generation.

Unmarred. As a pastor, I'm to make teaching God's truth my life's work. And I'm to do it faithfully until death. Nothing, nothing can be allowed into my life which will distract from or discourage me in this lifelong, all-consuming calling in my life.

This is why Greg and I have said from the inception of our church, we have said to you, the greatest blessing and ministry that you can provide to us as your pastors is to faithfully pray for us.

We are fighting sin. And folks, listen, we have great big targets on our backs. Do you not know that? And right here on my forehead. If there's anybody in this place that Satan wants to take out, it's he and I.

Him and me. Pray for us. Pray for us. Pray that we will be faithful to God, faithful to the truth, that we'll love Jesus, we'll fight sin, that we'll make wise decisions.

[55 : 41] Let me show you a passage. 1 Thessalonians 2. I'm going to bring it up here, but I'm going to turn there so I can read it.

1 Thessalonians 2. And I think I have it here. Yeah, there it is. It's up on the screen too. And for this reason, we also thank God without ceasing that when you receive the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it, not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also is at work in you who believe.

You see that? That is, that's just wonderful. You receive the word of God which you heard from us. Boy, that's just clear as day that what the apostles were teaching was the truly the word of God.

Then he goes on to say, you accepted it for what it really is, the word of God. And that word is at work in you. That describes the response that pastors hope for in people who are exposed to this ministry of commanding and teaching.

That you will receive it as the word of God. That's what we want. That's what we hope for. That's what we pray for. Every, every time we get together and we're in a venue where we're, we're commanding that you will receive it.

[57 : 04] Not as Jeff's words or Greg's words or in the case of our men's ministry, Matt's words, in the case, case of our women, Marivi and, and where's Melanie?

Where is she? She's in the, okay. We're trying to give you God's words. Now, I'd like to tell you that the majority of church people understand the pastor's ministry of commanding and teaching the things of God, but they don't.

They don't. The church at large. Not only do they not understand it, but many of them do not appreciate it. To the point that they cannot, do not, and will not tolerate straightforward Bible teaching and commanding.

Why? Why? Well, we've talked about it. If you'll stay tuned, I'll answer more of the why as we move through the passage. Now, let me hasten to add this. Greg and I are so blessed to have a church family who graciously supports us in our ministries as pastors to you.

You do. And you have from the beginning of our church family, haven't they? From the beginning that we constituted as Grace Church, we have experienced this wonderful affirmation of grace that you've brought to us as your pastors.

[58 : 17] in many, many, many ways you express that to us. You are expressively affirming, for example. You are expressively thankful.

You are expressively teachable. I don't want to underestimate for you or be remiss in telling you what a blessing it is for Greg and I to have people who are teachable. That you receive the word implanted.

And that you value that truth in your own life. We're blessed. As I was writing this this past week, in fact, I thought of how my own pastoral heart for you guys is reflected in Paul's heart for the Thessalonians.

So while I'm there, I'm going to read in 1 Thessalonians 2 again. And again, this is... My mind went here because I remembered this passage and I thought, oh, yes, that captures how I feel about these folks and what I'm trying to do with this message.

1 Thessalonians 2, beginning in verse 10. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how devoutly and righteously and blamelessly we behave towards you believers, just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and bearing witness to each one of you as a father would his own children.

[59 : 37] Why? So that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. You see that? Then, verse 13 that I just read, And for this reason also we thank God without ceasing that when you receive this word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it.

Not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also is at work in you who believe. Then if you drop down to chapter 3 and look at verse 11, these are the same sentiments I feel.

Now may our God and Father himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in what? Love for one another and for all people just as we also do for you so that he may strengthen your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Finally then, brothers, we ask and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that as you received from us how you ought to walk and please God just as you actually do walk that you excel still more for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

That's my heart. That's Greg's heart. This is what we want. In expressing his love for them, Paul told them that they were teachable and he was thankful for that.

[61 : 09] That they were walking with the Lord. They were actually trying to live out what Paul was teaching them and he was thankful for that as they tried to live that sound doctrine through faith in Christ.

But now look, he says, but I want you to excel still more. That's a pastor. Excel. Don't, don't, don't rest.

Don't sit back and congratulate yourself. Now excel still more. Keep going. The grace won't run out. Pray for more, to go more, to keep excelling in these things, the things of God.

That's our heart. More than anything, that's what we want to see happen. Now, I want to help you excel still more as you trust Greg and I to impart to you sound doctrine for godly living and serving.

So, this is very important. Very important. It's very important that we come to talk about this. Well, let me see.

[62 : 08] Have I got this up? Yes. How you are called by the Lord Jesus to support the sound teaching of truth in your local church context here at Grace Church.

It's great for me to talk about all this and lay out all this stuff about what pastors are supposed to do, but we need to be able to help you understand how all that connects to you being the people of God at this church.

Alright? So, it's been a little while since I reminded us of how we need to work together to carefully steward the offerings of modern technology in this particular area about sound doctrine in the life of the church family.

So, what are you talking about? I'm talking about the plethora of choices that we have in our modern age for you to tap into preaching and teaching outside of this ministry.

Alright? How technology has made that available to you. And I want to help you see something. I want to help you see how what we're talking about today relates to that.

[63 : 15] And why it's so important and how subtle it can be in the way of a danger. Okay? So, just hang with me and then we'll end. Let me just share some pastoral thoughts with you here.

On one side of this issue is the blessing. Here's what I mean. Technology has opened a sea of wonderful teaching and preaching from wonderful faithful teachers and preachers that you can access through all kinds of mediums.

I don't even know what they all are and I sure don't understand them. But, but, and they can be a blessing. And in some of your cases I know you've shared they have been a blessing and that's good now, that's good.

I don't want to take away from that. But now please hear this, pastorally hear this, there's another side, a more ominous side to that same blessing in reality. On the other side is the blight.

that the blessing can become a way that hinders or even hurts our ministries here at Grace. Now my pastoral encouragement comes in the way of an appeal, a pastoral appeal to you at this point.

[64 : 25] It's an appeal to you to allow Greg and I to be your primary pastors, preachers, and teachers of sound doctrine.

That's it. We're asking you to allow us to be your primary pastors and teachers and purveyors of sound doctrine in your life.

Now I want to flesh that out with you just a little bit. I don't want to run the risk that we don't talk about this and Satan uses it against us because he will. He'll use a good thing and a heartbeat to get between your pastors and you.

Let me give you some examples of what I mean. Let's start with the sermons from each Sunday morning. Here's the question. How will you apply what you hear in today's message to your life tomorrow?

That is always the question on the table every Sunday. How will you labor and strive to apply the truth that you hear today in your life tomorrow?

[65 : 36] How are you going to do that? You got a plan? Do you have a purpose? Are you intentional? In what ways are you applying our teaching to your daily life each week?

You see, I gear and I craft my messages and I know Greg does the same thing when he's able to teach and preach. Greg is only more limited because he works a 50,000 hour a week job that is very, very demanding on him.

So I'm telling you, any gravy you get from Greg is a monumental effort and I love you for it. He doesn't have near the time I have to put into this and he is every bit as faithful, if not more, in many ways and I just love him for it, for his heart, for the church and for Christ.

What are you doing each week as Greg and I work to gear our teaching to you? As we consider you, as I sit and see your faces and consider what you told me this past week and how this passage might help you and speak to that.

I will never throw you under the bus in my sermons. Some of you may feel that way. Oh boy, Jeff just said that. I told him this last week and he's targeting me. No, no, I won't do that.

[67 : 00] I try very hard not to laugh, but I do think of you. I do think of you as I do that. Another example is what we're about to do with our three sessions from the book Life in the Father's House.

That teaching is expressly for you. Greg and I are diligently laboring to bring that teaching to this church family because we have an unprecedented number of families who are trying to move through the membership process.

We're not doing this because we have time to do it. We're making time to do it because this is a need. You guys need this. So we're making it available to you because we want to shepherd you.

We don't want you to be discouraged that you have a book that thick to read before you can become a member. We want to encourage you. We want you to see the priority on it. We place a heavy priority on that book because it takes you into scripture and it helps us talk about how Grace Church Williamsburg your pastors understand membership at our church.

You need to know that going in don't you? That's why we're doing this. We're crafting it for you. We want to apply and pursue biblical truth as it relates to being a member of Grace Church Williamsburg.

[68 : 16] What about our women's studies? Think of this with me. Our women's studies are aimed at where you are as a woman, a wife, a mom, a single person, whatever.

We're trying to aim where you are in your walk of faith because we get to know you. We go to coffee with you. We talk to you. We catch you out in the hallway and catch up with you. We want to know how we can come alongside the women in our church to encourage you as a woman of grace, to live faithfully to Jesus, to honor your husband, love your kids, to navigate all of the challenges you face and the time constraints on you, the discouragement that you're tempted to come into.

When our men meet, we're teaching and instructing in sound doctrine related to how we know your life as your pastors.

You're our friends, guys. We want to come alongside you. You see, before you listen to another pastor or teacher through the week, all we're asking is this.

Before you seek out some other person through the media to teach or to counsel you through some matter of doctrine or life, have you first allowed Greg and I to be that person in your life?

[69 : 38] That's all we're asking. Do you see where I'm coming from? Let us be your pastors. I can't hold a candle to John MacArthur. Don't make me. I'll lose.

But I love you and I want to shepherd you in the truth. And as I stammer and stumble around trying to do it, let me be who I am. Let me come alongside and put my arm around you and stumble along.

You help me. And we'll stumble along together. But the point is, we're doing it together and we know each other. So I'm not telling you, don't listen to other people.

I'm saying, what are you doing with the material we're providing for you first? If you leave here and you listen to four more preachers and podcasts through the week and this sermon gets left to Sunday and you do nothing with it, oh folks, that's not good.

You've got plenty of material here today. You can talk about it with your family. You can use it for devotional material. You can find a friend. You can go to coffee and disciple somebody and talk.

[70 : 45] Hey, our pastor's been talking about sound doctrine and its importance in the church and how we all need to own that together and be on the same page. What do you think about that? Let me show you the passage.

How does that strike you? And see what they say. Depending on who it is, they may not know what to say. Allow us to do this in your life.

It's a matter, I've made a note here, it's a matter of how you're following the Lord Jesus' instruction to support your pastor's work and friendship among you.

Among you. I'll go just a little further and then I'm done. I realize from the years I've been doing this that many of God's people haven't even thought about this kind of thing in these ways.

Mainly because they've never had anyone teach them. Right? Well, we don't want to neglect teaching you this. They've never had anyone challenge them. They've never had anyone come alongside and guide them in how the Bible speaks about learning and growing in grace through the local church.

[71 : 58] Ladies, look, guys, look. You go out there, you want to do these Bible studies and all that kind of stuff? Okay, well, look. here's the thing we would appeal to you about. Who are those people accountable to for what they're teaching?

They're not accountable to your pastors. How are we going to safeguard what they're teaching you to be sound doctrine? You say, well, Jeff, I'm perfectly capable of doing that. I'm a mature believer.

That's not the point. The point is they're not your pastors. We are. Ladies, guys, you want a Bible study that you're attending out there and how many of them do you need?

The first question I'll ask you is what are you doing with the material and the Bible studies we offer here? Are you attending? Are you? Are you coming to our Bible studies? Are you using the material we put to you in the Bible studies to help you grow in the Lord?

Or you need all those out there? Look, Greg and I have no say in what they teach. And so we're trying to bring the need for those studies into our local ministry so that Greg and I can oversee those and make sure that we're dealing in sound doctrine because we don't want you fed even oatmeal, much less poison.

[73 : 13] We want you to receive the true meat of the word of God and then we want to help you learn to digest it because that's what's going to hold us together. That's going to teach us how to grow in the love of the Lord.

So don't let those things out there compete with you being a part of this church and making our local church teachings and offerings sound healthy, vibrant. Ask yourself how you're investing in us doing that because that's what we need, isn't it?

That's all I'm asking. Boy, the pastor said we can't listen to other people. I didn't say that. I didn't say that. The priority of the local church is God's plan for our growth in the knowledge and grace of the Lord.

But, but, I promise you I'd end. Sound doctrine will only serve to define and empower our church life to the degree we are committed to share in it and to obey it as a church family.

This can't just be the hobby horse of your pastors. It has to be all of us understanding the importance of this. So, there has to be a shared church-wide focus on the priority of commanding and teaching pure doctrine.

[74 : 25] the pure things of God from scripture. It's harder, it's more work, and it's unpopular, but it is God's way.

I once heard somebody say about John MacArthur, actually he told the story, that he was a, they thought him to be a harsh man because of his pulpit presence, not because John's harsh because he's commanding.

He's no nonsense. You listen to John, you're going to hear truth and it's going to slap you right in the face because John is preaching with authority from the scriptures. It's no nonsense.

But then they met him and they were like, he's actually a really nice guy. I'm like, well, of course. He's a nice guy in the pulpit too, but when he's in the pulpit, he's God's mouthpiece.

And there's no mealy-mouthing, there's no room for that. No. The service each of us give to the church family has to grow out of our own knowledge and understanding of our commitment to the truth of God given to us in the scriptures.

[75 : 35] So we're all servants of God in Christ. We're all servants of his word and servants of each other. So look, let's be gentle servants of Jesus together, tenaciously and graciously expressing our shared devotion to Jesus as we commit ourselves to commanding and teaching these things together.

Together. Let's pray. Well, dear Father, I thank you for your word and I thank you almighty God that you have given the task of commanding and teaching these things to weak willed men.

frail clay pots who are desperately in need of your grace so that all the power and the glory go to you.

When we are able to stand up here and do this, the people see the power of God at work in a clay pot. They see the grace of God at work in someone who isn't worthy to do this in and of themselves.

So, God, we thank you. We thank you for the pastors and teachers across the world that you've called out and that are sacrificially giving themselves to you out of love and devotion to Jesus to preach the word, to command and teach these things.

[76 : 59] Men, in some cases, who have lost their lives, some of them are currently in prison because they've remained faithful and true and gracious. God, we pray that in our own church family, you would help us to adopt the spirit and the heart and the attitude and continually encourage one another in that same attitude of wanting and needing the truth of the Lord in our lives.

And help your servants to be humble in its presentation and compassionate in its communication. Help us to be men of courage, conviction, clarity, and compassion as we preach Jesus crucified and buried and raised again.

thank you for your people who receive into their hearts your truth and have a desire to please Jesus in all things. It's in his name we pray. Amen.