

A Noble Servant's Focus for Ministry: Biblical Ministry as a Lifestyle (Part 2)

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Date: 26 May 2024

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[0 : 00] Beloved, I'll invite you to turn in the Bible to the book of 1 Timothy. We've taken a break from Genesis, not for any negative reasons, but just because I wanted in my own life to reflect on the passage we'll be dealing with this morning.

I've been in it for several weeks now. And it has been balm for my soul. And I hope balm for yours as well.

1 Timothy chapter 4 is where we will be. And in this particular series, as I do these expositions through 1 Timothy 4, the title of the message, A Noble Servant's Focus for Ministry, Biblical Ministry as a Lifestyle.

This is part two. It's actually, I think I've preached four or five sermons so far from chapter four. But this part two that we have here is focusing on Timothy being an example for the church by the way that he lives and approaches ministry.

The first part dealt with how he handles the Word of God among the people. Now God is saying, Timothy, I want you to take how you handle the Word, and I want that to be personal for your life, for your living, how you flesh out, live out the truth of Almighty God.

[1 : 26] So join me in 1 Timothy chapter 4. And I will, let me just grab the context here. We'll start reading in verse 6. In pointing out these things to the brothers, these things refer to all that he's been talking about in this letter to this point, but particularly the nearer context of chapter 4, verses 1 through 5, where he talks about false teachers and the error that they are bringing into the church.

These men have snuck in unawares. They are leaders in the church, and they are exerting a terrible, ungodly influence on the people because they are teaching strange or false doctrines. And this happens. Paul warned us, these guys will be with you. They will sneak in. They will be part of you. It's just a matter of when, not if. So in pointing out these things to the brothers and the sisters, you will be a good servant.

This is where we get the title from. Good or noble could be a translation there. Of Christ Jesus being nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine.

The pure words, the pure teaching, the pure beliefs of the Lord, which you have been following. But refuse godless myths fit only for old women.

[3 : 01] On the other hand, train yourself for the purpose of godliness. 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. Now verse 9 refers to verse 8. It is a trustworthy saying and deserving full acceptance.

What he said in verse 8. For it is for this, that is for godliness, we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

Command and teach these things. Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but show yourself as a model, an example to those who believe in word, conduct, love, faith, and purity.

That is, Timothy, show yourself a model in the way that you handle and live out the word of God in your conduct, in the way that you love others, in your faith and in your purity.

[4 : 13] Until I come, Timothy, give your full undevoted attention or your full devoted attention to the public reading of Scripture.

There it is. That's why we did that this morning. To exhortation or encouragement, spiritual encouragement, and to teaching. Do not neglect the gift within you, which was given to you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the counsel of elders, or your translation might say the presbytery.

Take pains with these things. Be absorbed in them so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching.

Persevere in these things. For as you do this, you will save both yourself and those who hear you. If you go to 1 Timothy 3, you will see this list of character qualities that outline what a man needs to be on his inside, if you will, if he is to aspire to pastoring, like Greg and I, to eldership in the church. You want a man of this kind of character. 1 Timothy 3. You'll see that in the first seven verses or so, dealing with those character qualities. Then, if you turn over to 1 Timothy 4 and deal with what we just read, you get those character qualities of that man, who he really is on the inside, the core of his personality.

[5 : 46] You get those being fleshed out or worked out in his life as he approaches God's Word and does pastoral service in the life of the church family. So, this is critical stuff.

This would be the way that we would understand a job description. If 1 Timothy 3 deals with the character of the person that you want to interview, they have to first of all meet that criterion before you can move on to talk to them about actually doing the work.

We want these kind of men. Then you move over to 1 Timothy 4 and you get the job description. Timothy, here are the kinds of things that a pastor needs to focus on if he is to be a man of noble character and noble work.

This is what he needs to do. So, we don't have to make it up. We don't have to be clever. What do we have to be? Greg and I, as pastors here at Grace, we need to be faithful.

We're not perfect any more than you are. You stumble and you struggle in your walk. We stumble. We struggle in our walk. What do we have to deal with? We have to deal with pride.

[7 : 01] We have to deal with greed. We have to deal with distraction. We have to deal with the desire for ease. We have to fight all that stuff just like you do.

Which is why we ask you to pray for us and be faithful in supporting us. Now, one of the reasons that we all need to understand this role of pastoral ministry, even though you're looking up here and saying, yeah, well, I'm not a pastor.

Why do you? Well, I understand that. But you are part of the life of your pastors. And you, as a congregation, need to understand what it is that God puts as priority for us.

The first reason that you need to know that is because you need to pray for us according to the priority. You need to ask God to help us stay focused on these things as we serve the life of our church.

This is what we're to be dedicated to. Now, for those of you who've been here, I've preached three or four sermons or so working through this, maybe more than that, I don't remember, dealing with all of the issues, working its way up to where we will be today.

[8 : 05] I've handled at least three. I did an introductory and then I've handled at least three messages fleshing out all of this. And now we come to today and my goal is to do three more together.

So I've done three separate ones and now today I've got to shrink all of them to just one. Good luck, right? We'll see. We'll see how it all comes out. A couple of Sundays ago, I dealt with verse 13 in 1 Timothy 4.

Until I come, Paul says, until I can get there, the Apostle Paul telling his young protege, Timothy, until I can get to Ephesus, where Timothy is pastoring the church here, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.

That was last week. Now, I asked the question in the way of my introduction, I asked, how is it that we here at Grace Church Williamsburg understand our church's reason for being?

Now, think about that, really. How do you understand our reason for being? And I'll tell you what, it's not.

[9 : 16] It's not to give me a job. I'm the only paid staff guy right now. Greg and I pastor together, but Greg has a secular job.

It's not to give me a job, although I'm very grateful for the fact that I can make a living doing this in my column. If you were asked to explain why Grace Church Williamsburg exists, what would you say?

If you were in a conversation with somebody out there and they were asking about our church and they asked you a very basic question because they honestly didn't know, why are you guys even here? Why did you even bother to start this effort five and a half years ago?

What would you say? Could you answer them from Scripture? Could you give them the biblical warrants for why we exist as Grace Church? Why don't we fold up and all of you scatter to the other churches that are in the area today and help them and make them stronger?

Why do we exist? And what would you say to someone who might ask you what our gathering this morning is all about?

[10:27] Why do you guys do that? Why do you show up on Sunday? Why do you? When you walk through those doors, do you have in your mind a biblical purpose and rationale for the priority of being here on Sunday morning rather than somewhere else?

Why do you do that? You guys know I love the lake. We could be at the lake right now. Partying. Why aren't we doing that?

We're going to do that in a little while, aren't we? But we're going to meet here first and then we're going to go to the lake. Yeah. These questions cause you and I to think about what it is that we are focused on as we gather together as Grace Church Williamsburg.

This local expression of belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. What are we focused on? What are you focused on? Well, that focus that I'm alluding to here, that focus is set, that focus is maintained, and that focus is protected by your pastors.

It is further supported by the members of our church family. So the ministry dynamic of understanding, protecting, supporting, and what I'm talking about now is shared by both pastors and people concerning our collective focus on why we exist.

[12:08] And that is critical to our mission for King Jesus. You've heard me say in this series, it is very easy to get off course. It is very easy to miss the point of why we're here, why we gather, what justifies us being who we are doing what we're doing.

Very easy to miss. Very easy for you, for Greg and I, to get distracted from, if we're not careful. Hence what he's going to be telling Timothy in just a few minutes.

The instruction for Timothy laid down in 1 Timothy 4, particularly 6-16, teaches the excellent way of true, that is, genuine, sincere, God-honoring, biblical ministry.

Particularly as that ministry is done by pastors. I've not made any secret of the fact that I realize the Apostle Paul is writing to Timothy in this letter. This instruction is specific to a young man in ministry trying to serve as a shepherd, as a pastor.

But it is very important for you to understand that this is for you too. This would have been read aloud in the congregation, it would have been shared with other congregations, and the people would have been called to live this kind of focused life and ministry together.

[13:29] Alright, pop quiz. How many of you remember what I define as a minister? What's another word for saying that you or me or whoever is a minister?

What's another word for that? It begins with an S. Servant. So when we talk about the ministry, I might narrow it and define it as this is what Greg and I do in pastoral ministry, vocational ministry. But no, the Bible uses this even here to talk about servants. You're a servant. If you're in the Lord, you're a servant of the Lord. So you are a minister.

It's perfectly fine for me to call you as a Christian a minister. Even though you don't make a living doing this. You're a servant of the Lord and so you've been made a servant of one another.

This will come out again in just a moment as Paul talks to Timothy about this and he's going to be very concerned with this. Timothy, listen. You've got to set the benchmarks. You've got to step up to the plate and you have to be an example and a model for how this looks, how this works out.

[14:40] You've got to give the people a picture of this happening in your life because that sets the standard for what they're being called to collectively. Somebody's got to do that.

Now you can imagine being a young man in ministry, this is intimidating stuff. He's facing formidable opposition in some very intelligent men who have packed together, solidified themselves as an entity, a wall of falsehood.

And now this young man is coming into the picture and he's supposed to confront this. I shared all that with you last time. I took you back into the context and showed you where Paul said to Timothy basically, challenge them.

Here's how we'd say it today, brother. We'd say, get in their face. Get right up in their face and command them to stop teaching these things because it's gangrenous, gangrene for the congregation.

You can't play with this, son. So this is not a calling for weak men. This is a calling for men to trust the Lord and to stand in the courage of Jesus Christ because the welfare of the sheep are at stake. [15:56] And a good shepherd does what for the sheep? He lays down his life for them, doesn't he? He protects them. Gives and does whatever is necessary to keep them safe.

The Apostle Paul then gives us some very pointed, vital teaching on a pastor's role as shepherd and about his work of shepherding among God's people.

If you look with me real quickly, I just want to do this real quick just to give you more of a context of how he's hammering this in these two letters to Timothy. Chapter 2 of 2 Timothy.

Chapter 2 of 2 Timothy verse 15. Paul is speaking about Timothy's role as a shepherd and his work in shepherding.

And what does he say? Be diligent to present yourself approved to God. See, that's my first order of business is not to present myself approved to you, but to the Lord.

[16:59] And do that as a workman who does not need to be ashamed accurately handling the word of truth. That's my calling.

To present myself to God accurately handling the word of truth. Then if you look over in chapter 4 of 2 Timothy, listen to this.

Chapter 4 verse 1. Now listen to how sober-minded and serious Paul is as he gives this counsel to Timothy. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead and by his appearing and his kingdom.

Now you can't challenge somebody more deeply than that if you're in the faith. preach the word. the word. the word. Be ready in season and out of season.

Reprove the congregation. Rebuke the congregation. Exhort the congregation with great patience and teaching.

[18:09] the time for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine and then they'll want somebody to tell them what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear. And he's saying don't capitulate.

Don't cave into that. Stay faithful to the truth, Timothy. Preach the word. The people need God's word, not yours. You don't need Jeff, do you?

You need Jesus working through Jeff and through Greg. That's the side of the pastors to the people. You read that, you hear that, alright.

Pastors, preach the word, teach the word, live the word, minister the word, encourage in the word, make the word the basis of what you're preaching, teaching, and living. Alright?

Now listen, what of the side of the people to the pastors in this biblical focus for ministry in the church? Now this is all in the way of introduction. This isn't costing you anything.

[19:07] We'll get to the other stuff in a minute. Alright? I'm just warming you up. Are you ready? You don't look ready. Come on. Alright, I'm getting you ready here. This is 1 Thessalonians chapter 5.

So go back a couple of pages here. 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. I want you to see this. What about the side of people to pastors in this focus for ministry?

We're going to pick it up in verses 12 and 13. Now remember he's had five chapters say a lot of stuff. We're just picking it up in two verses. But we ask of you brothers that you know those who labor among you.

You've heard me teach from this before and you know the know here means that now it is incumbent upon you. The onus is on you to get to know your pastors in a personal way.

To make your pastors part of your life. Know those who labor among you and lead you in the Lord and admonish you.

[20:12] Verse 13 that you regard them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

This is one of the prescriptions that the apostle Paul is laying down for the Christians at Thessalonica that promote peace among the brothers and sisters in any given congregation.

You want peace in the congregation? I do. Greg does. Get to know your pastors. Get them involved in your life. Invite them in. Make them part of who you are.

Pray for them. Get to know them. Believe the best about them. Look, it's really hard for you to get cantankerous and it's really hard for you to get your little hee-fee's hurt if you're believing the best about the pastors.

Come on. If you have come to the place in your life where you say, you know what, I want to know these guys. I want to believe the best about these guys. I want these guys involved in my life and in my family.

[21 : 14] You know, I can't be best friends with everybody but boy, I would like to try. I'd like to wear myself out trying. What a way to go. Trying to be your best friend and believe the best about you and throw everything that I have into encouraging you to be like Jesus.

What a way to go out. Let's go out like that. When you're doing that, it's hard for you to be offended by it. Because, Greg, we're boneheads.

Now, we're just men. We're just men. And we're not sufficient for these things. It is by God's grace and mercy that we are made sufficient to do something that is way above our pay grade.

Who is sufficient to serve the Lord of glory? Who is sufficient to handle the most perfect thing to ever be given to human beings? God's word. Who can be? That's why I ran.

When I started the sense that God was calling me to ministry, I ran. I was a coward. I didn't want to do it. I did not want to do it.

[22 : 25] God had to work with my heart to get me there. So what we're seeing here is Paul instructing that you regard these men in your life very highly in love.

Notice, beloved, notice, because of their work. Verse 13. Because of their work. Now, the question begs, what work is Paul referring to that we're to so highly esteem our pastors for?

Well, verse 12 gives us a very clarifying answer for that. We ask of you, brothers and sisters, that you know those who labor among you, lead you in the Lord, and admonish you.

First and Second Timothy, the books of First and Second Timothy, also flesh out much of what this work of pastoral ministry is. Your pastors then labor, lead, and admonish you, primarily as they preach and teach God's truth.

So in First Timothy chapter 4, 11 through 16, where we've been this past month or so, Paul was reminding young Pastor Timothy that his focus on certain ministry essentials would help him stay on course as he served in a very difficult situation.

[23 : 46] Again, I mentioned the false teachers are there. They're intimidating men, they're intelligent men, they're powerful men. They've come together and now Timothy has to face these men and protect God's sheep until Paul can get there to give him some help.

Now, over the course of the past month or so, I've been unpacking all of that. And here's what I called it. I'm just going to lay it out here and then we'll walk through it together. Six ministry essentials that help us maintain a godly focus in our service in the life of our church.

Six ministry essentials that are going to help us maintain a godly focus in our service in the life of our church family.

Greg and I are not responsible for what's going on down the road at other churches or across the state or whatever. Here is where God's planted us. So this is what we're focused on.

Now the first three essentials which Paul gave to Timothy, this was over the last weeks or so, here they are, I'll just outline them real quickly, carefully teaching pure doctrine, that was verse 11, overcoming challenges through being a godly example, verse 12, and devoting yourself, Timothy, to, notice, church ministry, 413, made a big deal of that.

[25 : 10] Church ministry. This is work being done within the confines of a local assembly. That's very important because that tells us that God has specific designs and purposes for church work.

This isn't McDonald's work, this isn't corporation work, this isn't business work, there's nothing like the church on the face of the earth. And so emphasize, Timothy, church ministry, or church service, serving in a local assembly of people.

Today we're going to examine the remaining three ministry essentials, God willing, that deserves Timothy's discipline, focus, and ours. So number four, we'll pick up here, if you want to know more, there was a sermon for each one of those, and I tried to unpack that.

Here's where we're going to go today. Number four here, a biblical focus on doing God's work, God's way. You say, well, of course, yeah. That is so basic. You say that, it's like, duh, doing God's work, God's way, it's his church.

You'd be surprised. You'd be surprised to find out how many churches out there and how many pastors are tempted away from remembering that this is God's work.

[26 : 25] You're his people, not mine. I'm one of you. Greg's one of you. And that we are called to do this work among God's people, God's way, not the way of the world, we don't need business

principles to bring into the church.

It's not like God gave us Jesus and the word and said, now, good luck. There's a lot I left out. No, he did not. He gave us everything we need for life and godliness and to be his kids and learn to play well together.

No biting, no scratching, no hitting, no temper tantrums. If you throw one, you're going to get a spanking. The God squad's going to show up at your door and say, don't do that or whatever. We're a family and we're learning to live as God's family together. So this is verse 14 back in 1 Timothy.

Do not neglect. He puts it in a negative way. Do not neglect the gift within you which was given to you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the council of elders.

[27 : 34] I'm reading from the Legacy Standard Bible. I switched over to it months ago from the New American Standard. I'm trying it out. We'll see how it goes. So if it reads a little differently from what you have, that's the translation.

All right, let's jump into it. First of all, right out of the gate, we have this imperative. And I'll tell you what those are in just a second. Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you.

Let's focus on neglect. Neglect is *amaleo*. The Greek word *amaleo*. It's in the present tense imperative in the grammar here. And it means do not be careless about.

Do not disregard. The fact that it is in the present tense in the grammar here means this in this context. The present tense communicates to us that this is to be an ongoing action.

This is where we get all of this from. The Greek language was very rich. It was deep. It was wonderful. We're so glad God chose it because of the nuance it communicates.

[28 : 36] You kind of lose it in the English. But here the present tense tells us, Timothy, this is to be an ongoing work in your life. It's not a one and done. Then there's an imperative.

It is a present tense imperative. The imperative means it's a command. I'm not making suggestions here, Timothy. I'm telling you, do not neglect this.

I'm commanding you, young man. This is a command of the Lord. In fact, there are, I think, nine imperatives from verse 11 down. Nine separate commands of what Timothy is to do and not do. This is power packed with the Apostle Paul giving the job description that he wants Timothy to follow and for all pastors to follow as an example.

do not neglect the spiritual gift within you. Keep a, I may sum it up this way, keep a spiritual perspective crystal clear in your heart as you minister God's word to God's people.

[29 : 42] Pastors are always thinking, always interpreting, always defining, and always acting from a spiritual component, a spiritual perspective about the life of our church, about your life, about how you face life, about how we go about things.

We're constantly asking ourselves, are we in the vein of keeping the main thing the main thing? And what is the main thing? It is spiritually seeing God's people grown up in likeness to Jesus.

Are you becoming more like Jesus? Or are you just busy? Or are you just religious? Not interested. What we want to know is, are you growing up in the Lord Jesus?

Are you loving Him more? Is He becoming more precious to you? Are you learning to love the things God loves most? His word, His people, and His Son? Are you growing to love more of what God loves most?

His word, His people, and His Son? If you can say, yes, I stumble along, but I can see a progress. It might be slow, and it might be faltering, but yes, alright, alright.

[30 : 56] That's the main thing. That's what He and I are focused on. Everything we do in the life of our church gets measured against that. If it's not going to help us do that, and not going to help us do it in the best way, we either set it aside for a different time, or we chunk it all together.

And that's how we stay on the main thing. If God grants this church life 25 years from now, when Greg and I are no longer the pastors here, I know I won't be, 25 years from now, and the other guys pick up the baton, and they start running their pastoral lap for this church, we want them to be able to stand on a foundation that we've laid that said, you kept the main thing the main thing, and the main thing is Jesus.

So, we'll help you look, if I'm still alive, we'll help you look for your next pastor, and we'll make sure he understands what the main thing is. You know what? Nobody coming in here and messing this up.

Stay focused. That's why I'm preaching about focus. What's he saying? Don't be careless. Don't be apathetic. Don't be distracted about applying your God-given ability to communicate the Word of God to God's people.

Timothy, don't. Don't let anything. Take your ministry seriously. Maintain a godly gratitude. Boy, there's the key. When I struggle most is when I lose that godly gratitude.

[32 : 18] When that godly gratitude starts to fade in my life, that's when I get in trouble in my heart. The work is wearying. It is. It's just wearying.

You're going to see why. But it doesn't have to be crushing. Paul said that. He said, you know, we're crushed, we're perplexed, but we're not beaten down to where we can't serve the Lord. Maintain that godly gratitude. Why? Why was it important for Timothy to not be careless, not be unconcerned, not neglect, not disregard using his spiritual gift?

I'll explain that gift in a minute. His giftedness was an expression. Now hear this, please. His giftedness was an expression of God's love both to him and to others.

Did you catch that now? The giftedness that God gives to Greg and I, first and foremost, it is a gift of love that God expresses to Greg and I and it is a gift of love that He expresses through us to you.

[33 : 24] That's why we were gifted with it. God lovingly involved Timothy in the work of heaven and earth.

Wow! God channeled his love through Timothy as Timothy used his gift to serve the body of Christ. Now, what a wonder and a privilege that God chooses to use you to help someone else get closer to Him. Isn't that something?

But doesn't that sober you? To think, wow, you mean, Jeff, my Christian life is more about God using me to help someone else advance in Christ's likeness than it is anything else?

Yes! Yes! That's exactly what he's saying. God loves others through you as you surrender yourself to use your giftedness that God's put in you to help them become more like Jesus.

[34 : 27] What a... That's a win-win. Everybody wins in that scenario. That is the wisdom of God. Greg and I could never have invented this. That's why if we try to get clever, we've got a couple of guys in our life like Jeremy, he's not here this morning, that will look at me because he said this to me in public before.

Jeff, stay in your lane. I need men like that in my life. Jeff, stay in your lane. It's another way of saying keep Jesus focused.

Focus now. I need that. You need it too though, don't you? We need that together. Timothy was to be an example in all things.

His giftedness helped define his position. His giftedness helped define his priorities in relationship to the church. So, neglecting to serve according to his giftedness is going to deprive people of blessings from the Lord.

And that's the way it is with you. The people of God suffer. We suffer when we are neglectful and careless in using our gift in the church.

[35 : 42] Now, you may be saying right now, Jeff, I didn't even know that Christians got a gift. I don't even know what that is. And if I did, I don't know what my gift is. Okay, hang on, that's all right.

You don't even have to know that when you walk out today to serve in the church. You don't have to know. It was a long time as a Christian. I didn't know what my spiritual gift was. I didn't even understand them. But I served among God's people.

And that's how I eventually found out what my giftedness was. If you would, look at 1 Peter chapter 4. Take you over there real quickly. Give you a little bit of further encouragement and wisdom in understanding and interpreting what he's saying here.

1 Peter, one of the other apostles, chapter 4, and we'll pick it up in verse 11 just to give you a little running context into what I want to show you.

Peter says, the end of all things is at hand. Therefore, be of sound thinking and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.

[36 : 46] So here he's calling these people be focused. This is 1 Peter 4 verse 7. Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another because love covers a multitude of sins.

Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. Now here it is. As each one has received a gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Boy, that is just packed. You might remember when we went through 1 Timothy and I preached through this, I put the brakes on right there. Whoever speaks as one speaking the oracles of God,

whoever serves as one serving by the strength which God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and might forever and ever. You see, this is all about God, isn't it? This is why grace, you know, if we ever had cards made up that said Grace Church Williamsburg and it said Greg Garrison and Jeff Jackson pastors, the byline would be where it's not about you.

That's what it would say. Why? Because everything about what we are and how we're to do it is from the grace of God by the grace of God for the glory of God. And that's what we're about.

[38 : 13] We're all about getting out of the way, getting ourselves out of the way so that God can use us to help each other grow up in the Lord Jesus. What a grand enterprise. Boy, you just can't invest anything better than that.

Why? Because that offers reward for now and that offers reward for later. You're building treasure in heaven as you do that. So you're winning across the spectrum of life on this earth.

I remember we did some teaching a couple of weeks ago. Greg and I did some fire hose intensive teaching for three days. We did it on a Wednesday night, a couple hours, Friday night, a couple of hours, and then a little more and a half a day on Saturday for the 12 different families who are interested in joining our church right now.

We had to do something to help them get through the process, right? So we were teaching and Mitch asked an excellent question when it came to this issue of gifts and he said is there a place in the scripture where the Bible speaks to every Christian receiving a gift from the Holy Spirit to do service in the church?

Remember that? Here it is. This is the verse. as each one has received a gift.

[39 : 24] That is a spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit. Yes, every Christian has such. There is no such thing as an ungifted Christian. So it's wrong to allow your gift to go unused.

Notice he says the spiritual gift within you. I'm back in Timothy now. I wish I can unpack the Peter thing more but it's enough for you to see that it's there. He says don't neglect the spiritual gift within you.

God gives each one of us at least one spiritual gift. Some of us will get more than one for the purpose of making us spiritually beneficial to one another and to God.

So again, pop quiz, when do you get your spiritual gift or gifts, when does that happen for you?

Alright?

It happens at conversion. When you are born again, when you become a Christian, when God opens your eyes and you come by faith to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sin, at that very instant as the Holy Spirit comes into your life and makes you alive in Jesus, Christ, you get at least one spiritual gift and that gift is for the purpose of you involving yourself in a local community and serving those people so that they can be grown up in Jesus and become more like him.

[40 : 54] That's why God says God knows what this church family in this time and season of its life needs in the way of giftedness and God's going to bring those people.

I don't have to go out there and worry myself sick, running around, trying to find people to do all the stuff that needs to be done around here. I just trust the Lord's going to bring them. Stay faithful to the main thing.

God knows who we need. He knows what we need. They're going to come in. They're going to join our church. They're going to get involved because we don't let you serve here until you join the church. There's reasons for that. We can go into that another time.

So you join, you get involved, you get invested. Listen, if you come here, sit and soak and you don't get involved, who loses? You lose and we lose. The congregation loses, I lose.

We all suffer the consequences of your lack of serving in the church. It's just the truth. There it is. Not making it up. That's what it says.

[41 : 53] And so Paul is telling Timothy, don't neglect that. Do not neglect that, young man. So this is about spiritual perspective with the goal of spiritual benefit or blessing in mind.

We need to take a spiritual perspective on this because we have a spiritual goal in mind. So again, this is not an earthly work based on earthly means for earthly ends.

That's why we don't need the counsel of the world to tell us how to be the church. What do they know? What did you know before you came to Christ?

I'll tell you what you knew. You knew religion at best. But you didn't know Jesus. But when you came to know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, trusting Him for the forgiveness of your sins, boy, that changed everything.

Because that's new life. That's something very radical. That's born of heaven. And your life begins to take on the look of something born of heaven.

[42 : 59] Oh! Serving others according to your giftedness is an act of humility. It's an act of submission to God and to each other.

It's an act of worship. People are inspired to worship by our service to each other. As we serve according to our giftedness, we do God's work God's way.

That's why it's so important. Alright, look into the text with me. Let's go a little bit further. Until I come, give attention to public reading of Scripture, exhortation, teaching. Do not neglect the gift within you which was given to you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the council of the elders.

Or laying on of hands by the presbytery is the way the New American Standard says put that up here. This is the NASB right here, I believe, that I'm using.

So godly men, what does this mean? Godly men had affirmed Timothy's giftedness for gospel ministry by literally laying their hands on Timothy and praying for him during a church gathering together.

[44 : 07] Now this action of laying on their hands, that did not put the gifting inside of Timothy. That's not right. That's a wrong way to look at this. This is not something coming by men through the agency of men.

This is a Holy Spirit thing. It's why we call them spiritual gifts. Spiritual means of the Holy Spirit. If it's spiritual, it's of the Holy Spirit purposed by him.

What these godly men did served to officially recognize and sanction Timothy's calling from God in the eyes of his fellow elders and in the congregation, the believers that were there.

So Timothy already had been gifted by the Holy Spirit prior to the laying on of hands. Now listen, you guys remember, were you here when we brought four men before you and made them deacons and we taught on it, we preached on it, we had a time when they all came up here and sat down and then Greg and I went through and we laid our hands on them and we prayed for them.

Well, when we did that, nothing special, nothing happened like that. It did not happen like that. They sat there and they received the prayer.

[45 : 23] What were Greg and I doing? We're coming before you and we were saying we love these men, we believe in these men, we believe that God would set these men apart to deacon in our church family and here they are.

And it was beautiful. It was sobering. And you needed to see that and those men needed to experience that. It was a way of legitimizing and recognizing them in their service to the church. You see, here's the thing. Those men had already been doing that stuff for a while which is why we brought them forward. They didn't start doing it when we laid our hands on them.

They were already doing it and they showed us they were deacons already. Now what we needed to do was come before you and say let's make it official. And that's part of the life of the church. That's what's going on with Timothy. This is a way of saying it's official young man. Calling this to his memory was a source of encouragement to Timothy.

[46 : 22] I could say so much about this. Paul was affirming Timothy. He was encouraging Timothy to recognize God has equipped you young man for this particular work.

Look, I can see this young man first in ministry taught by the Apostle Paul. What shoes to fill? The Apostle Paul for goodness sake. And now he's here facing these formidable men.

You know, the Apostle is saying Timothy, Timothy, God set you aside to do this. You can do this. You can do this because God is with you.

Okay, so remember that. Boy, if I was there and I'd have his face in my hand and I'd be looking straight into his eyes. Timothy, God is with you, son.

You can't retreat. You can't give up and you can't quit. When God's finished with you, you'll die. Until that day, breathe in and minister and serve.

[47 : 27] Now, go forward with courage, with conviction. In the name of the Lord Jesus, fulfill your ministry in accordance with the way that God has prepared and equipped you.

When you serve, when you, folks, when you serve in love according to your gift, God is going to bless you and He will bless other people through you. Your loving service encourages others to serve as they follow Jesus.

Just as that is contagious and infectious, the other is also contagious and infectious and that is laziness, lack of involvement, sitting on the fence, staying out in the periphery and just kind of watching everything.

That can suck the life out of a church family. You get over here and you get involved, you get your hands dirty, you invest, you find ways to encourage other people to be in the Lord Jesus Christ. I hate them.

A biblical focus on laboring on behalf of God. This is the oak. Yeah. What does he say? Notice next verse 15. Take pains with these things.

[48 : 34] My goodness, be absorbed in these things so that your progress will be evident to all. He's moving right along and I will look, take pains with these things.

That is, be absorbed in them. What are these things? The truths being taught here, the principles of ministry being laid down here. And what does he tell him?

Take pains with. These truths, these principles. Be absorbed in these things. This says something of the cost that is involved for a pastor in ministering God's truth in biblical ministry.

This will cost you as well. You'll pay a price for this. The nature of the work exacts a high price from faithful servants committed to serving God.

You're not always going to be able to do what you want to do. But God will give you the want to because serving in the church requires a taking pains with, being absorbed with.

[49 : 37] So Jeff, is it really that serious? Well, yeah, it is because of what he's going to say next. Look at this. Take pains with. Plan. Think through.

Prepare in a thorough manner. Be prepared to suffer and pay the cost of faithfulness with these things. It's like you want to take every single young guy that wants to do this and sit them down for like a month and just go through this and look them in the eye and say, now are you sure?

Listen, I'll tell you a quick story. When my oldest son was about 17, 18, he was just getting ready to go to college.

He came to me one day and he said, Dad, I think I want to go in the ministry. And you might think, oh, boy, what a moment.

You just jump up and down. You know what? I tried so hard to keep a straight face. I hugged him and I said, we'll talk some more about that. All right? We'll talk. I went and found a place to be alone and I cried like a baby.

[50 : 45] You know why? Because I knew if he did that, what would be in fear? I knew what would be that. Now, don't feel sorry for Greg and I. We're called to this.

But it is an exacting, wearying, soul-draining work that it's also the most soul-enriching things that a human being can do.

It's kind of like your kids. You love them to death and they can be the greatest blessing in your life and then the next minute, not so much. You know? It's like that.

Because people are involved. Starting with this people. I have to get past Jeff in order to be what Jesus wants me to be. That's why he's telling him, be prepared.

Be prepared to suffer because it's going to cost you everything to do this. Then he says, be absorbed. Be absorbed is literally be in them. You see how defining this is?

[51 : 51] It's a phrase that emphasizes being totally engulfed, totally consumed. You just want to tell every guy aspiring to pastoring and eldership in any level at all, are you sure?

Focus, devotion, courage, unwavering commitment. Pastoring is an absorbing occupation.

Everything about my life has to bow to the labor of love in ministering God's truth to God's people. Everything. The way I spend my money, the way I use my time, the way that I live my life as Sunday approaches, everything.

It's absorbing. That comes with the nature of pastoral work because it's work that involves soul-to-soul laboring in heavenly things, in eternal things, in these things.

Be absorbed with these things in your life. And for your part, for your part of the congregation, when you set your heart to truly invest in the heavenly priorities of spiritual life in the church family, this labor of love will absorb you too.

[53 : 00] Or will, I mean, it'll just, you know. That's a good thing. Now why? So that your progress, purpose clause, so that your progress may be evident to all.

Why do I want to take pains? Why do I want to be absorbed in this? Why do you need to be taking pains and be absorbed in serving in the church family, serving one another? I'm not talking about just being busy.

I'm talking about being involved in helping each other grow up in the Lord. That may mean cleaning the toilets. So that when we meet together, we have some clean facilities for people to make use of. Yeah. None of us are above that. If we care about serving the Lord. So that your progress, look, this is an often neglected and abused consequence of faithful ministry.

Are you with me? This is an often neglected and abused consequence of faithful ministry. The reality is that we are either demonstrating our spiritual progress or the lack of it.

[54 : 05] There's no middle ground. You're either demonstrating and being an example of spiritual maturity, even if that maturity kind of goes that's fine.

What you don't want is this because there's no hovering. There's no neutrality. You're either making spiritual progress or you're not. That is the way it works.

This is scary. You ever been there? I have. This is scary. Start doubting your salvation.

All kinds of stuff starts going on in your head. Can I pick that up there? There you go.

Progress. Progress could also be translated advancement. So this refers to credibility, competency, growth, maturity, and spiritual things.

[55 : 08] things worthy of our respect. Things worthy of your esteem. If you go back to 1 Thessalonians 5 and you remember, you're to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

Well, these are the kinds of things that help you esteem your pastors. Not because we're perfect. Not because we're set up on a pedestal as above all this, you know, the hoi polloi and all that because you see us giving ourselves as faithfully as we know how to be absorbed in these things, to not neglect these things, taking pains with these things.

Why? Because of what's involved. Because of what is going to happen if we're faithful. Evidence. So that your progress is evident.

So your advancement in spirituality is evident. Evident means exactly what you would think. It's something that is plainly recognized, clearly seen. Your focus, your devotion, your commitment, your hard work in ministry will be directly bearing on your testimony.

We might say it this way. Does your walk match your talk? Have you ever been around pastors whose walk did not match their talk? Have you ever been around pastors whose talk was not that true?

[56 : 32] I have. And it's hard. What about your lifestyle, Timothy? What does your lifestyle say to these people?

Now here's why Paul's so concerned about this being something that Timothy and each one of you need to take pains with and be absorbed in. Here it is. Listen. Your progress in the faith stands to be a way that God inspires others to grow in their faith.

Whoa. You could easily be thinking now, man, I don't want all that on me. Well, if you're a Christian, it came with the package. Look at this one.

A biblical focus on living and serving as God's steward. steward. As God's steward. He says this, verse 16, pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching.

Persevere in these things, for as you do this, you will save both yourself and those who hear you. My goodness. Did he just say that?

[57 : 41] He did. Pay close attention to. That's the stewardship of lifestyle. What he's saying is, watch your life. We could take that all apart, but it means exactly what it says.

Pay close attention to. Be aware of your life message. What does your life say to people? How you spend your time, how you spend your money, where you give priority, what your family does.

All of that says something about what's most important to you. Measure your life against the standard of God's truth. All right, now look at this one. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching.

That's very straightforward, isn't it? It's stewardship of ministry. In the first one, stewardship of your lifestyle. Watch your life. In this one, stewardship of ministry. Watch your ministry, Jeff. Watch your ministry, Jeff.

This does not come natural to you, Jeff. So, you better stay in the game. Keep your head in the game. That's it. Persevere in these things.

[58 : 43] Give yourself to this pursuit. Stay at it. Continue. Remain at your post. Be somebody that people can count on. Don't give up.

Why? Why? Why all of this? Here it is. For as you do this, see there's the key. For as you do this, as you're faithful in this, Timothy, what will happen?

You will ensure, what a word, salvation, both for yourself and for those who hear you. Oh, my goodness. See, that's why I ran from the Lord.

That's why I ran. I didn't want that on me. Can't get away from it. Living according to God's truth results in salvation.

Hear what I say. I don't save you. God's word saves you. Right? Amen. But look, we cultivate personal holiness as we live God's truth.

[59 : 48] We experience God's saving grace as we live out his truth in scripture. Grace upon grace. So ministering or serving according to God's truth results in the salvation of other people.

As you and I are faithful to the truth, to live and to share the truth, to call people to the truth and help them see God's lines of demarcation and things like that, then God will use his truth to enlighten their eyes and animate them into spiritual life.

It only happens through the word. Let me give you a reference. We won't go there. Hebrews 4, 12 and 13. Look it up later. Hebrews, don't look it up now. All right. Hebrews 4, 12 and 13 will be a great verse for you in this.

people cannot be saved from sin apart from the truth of the Lord. That's all we're saying. So Timothy, live as a minister of the truth so that yourself and others can then live in a right relationship with God.

I'll tell you, it's not for the faint-hearted. So sharing, sharing in a biblical focus for service in the church brings us together. You want to know how a church is unified?

[61 : 10] Here it is. As we share in a biblical focus for serving one another in the Lord, making it about the Lord and the glory of the Lord and growing up in Jesus, it draws us together so that we all are emphasizing God's essentials for being his people.

So these six ministry essentials help you and I practically express our love for the Lord in one another. You say, Jeff, these are not just rules that we go by. No, you know, Greg and I aren't throwing these up here every Sunday and saying, all right, make sure you're doing this and you're going to get an electrocution zap or something from the spirit.

We're not doing that. What are we saying? We're saying, hey, these are ways that God has mandated so that we learn to love one another. This helps you and I love you too.

Because I don't trust me and I don't trust you trusting me. We trust the Lord and we serve the Lord and we keep the focus there.

So here they are. A biblical focus then on pure doctrine. Go back, listen to that. That's where it all stands. That's the foundation. Being a godly example, a biblical focus on church ministry, doing God's work, God's way, laboring on behalf of God.

[62 : 26] We understand we're in this for the glory of the Lord ultimately. And then living and serving as God's steward. I've been given a stewardship. So have you. That's a manager. I've been made a manager of the truth of the Lord so that my own life will be blessed and so that the lives of others will be blessed.

That's a stewardship. It's a privilege. Now, folks, your giftedness from God, your labor on behalf of God, your life as God's steward all come together to say that your life in the church is not about you. We say that in love, not in a degrading way. It's not that you don't matter. I mean, Jesus went to the cross and bled out his life blood so that he could save you and make you part of his people.

You matter. You do matter. It's about letting the love of God be seen in and through you as you serve God by serving each other.

That's how they know that we love the Lord and that the love of God is real because they see that love at work in the way that we live together. It's not just a Sunday thing.

[63 : 37] It's a Sunday through Saturday thing. I want to close with this verse from Peter. I'll just put it up here on the screen for us. This is Peter again. As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

God just comes from God. Whoever speaks. Then he's giving an example. He's just given a couple of examples. It's not it's not an exhaustive list of the gifts. For example, whoever speaks, let him speak as it were the utterances of God.

Let him speak the truth in love. Let him talk God's talk to each other. All right. Now look at the next one. Whoever serves because that that that that gets us all whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies.

And why? Here's the purpose clause again. So that in all things, not a few, but all things, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. Our walk with Jesus being the main thing to whom belongs the glory, dominion.

See, we we deny Jesus glory when we're not living like this. And we can only live like this by grace through faith. Right. So what are we praying for?

[64 : 54] More grace. What are we asking God for? Faithfulness in life. God, give me a heart for these people so that I can pour my life into them so that they will grow up in Jesus.

And then then I'll be done. And then when nobody runs up to thank you and tell you how often you are. And what a great servant in Jesus you are.

When they don't line up to do that. You're not going to go. Fine. And do the pouty thing. You're not going to. You know why?

Because the main reason that you're doing this isn't to get that from them. It's to honor and glorify Jesus because you know whether you get thanks or not. You are glorifying Jesus in your commitment to those things that I put up there.

This is how Jesus gets glory to church life. That's enough. Or you and I would have got out of this a long time ago, right?

[65 : 56] Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Well, dear Father, as we kind of ran through this exercise of closing out 1st Timothy 4, our hearts recognize that all those years ago, 2,000 years ago, when the Apostle Paul sat down to pen this letter in a very personal correspondence to Timothy, the Holy Spirit led him in every word so that this is as much the authorship of God, if not more than it was the Apostle Paul.

And it carries over into time so that now our church can be blessed by this instruction. Greg and I can take comfort in this instruction. Your people can be blessed in understanding this is what pastors are called to in their role of shepherding in their work.

So I pray that the people will pray for us to be faithful to this. As Greg and I stumble and falter in this, that the people will be gracious and forgiving. They will continue to believe the best as we all strive together to honor Jesus.

And for all of those men that you will call to Grace Church Williamsburg in the way of leadership and shepherding and pastoring, may you give them this kind of heart to follow Jesus and to do whatever is necessary to safeguard the sheep in the goodness of Jesus.

We pray in his precious name and for his glory. Amen.