

## Message #26

## I Timothy 4:6-10

What is the basis for having God classify a man as an excellent minister? Notice my question “What is the basis for having God classify a man as an excellent minister?” I did not ask what the basis is for having people classify a man as an excellent minister.

The words “you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus” (4:6) really sets the stage for the final discussion of the book. The actual Greek words “good servant” literally refers to one who ministers in a way God classifies as an excellent way (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 228).

**IF A CHURCH IS TO BECOME A PILLAR AND SUPPORT OF THE TRUTH OF GOD, IT NEEDS A MINISTER WHO WILL CONTINUALLY TAKE HIS TEACHING OF GOD’S WORD AND HIS OWN SPIRITUALITY VERY SERIOUSLY SO GOD WILL CLASSIFY HIM AS AN EXCELLENT MINISTER.**

There are applications in this passage for everyone, but this text is aimed straight at the minister who is given responsibility of directing and leading God’s church.

**QUALITY #1** – An excellent minister will continually lay down the Word of God to the brethren. **4:6a**

The words “point out” literally mean to lay down and to place under. Paul’s point is that an excellent minister, from God’s classification, will be one who is continually (present tense) laying down or placing people under the authority of the Word of God. Carefully notice who the target is of Biblical instruction–“the brethren.”

Paul’s point is simply this: a good minister will be one who is continually setting forth the Word of God to the believers in the church. That instruction will be both positive and negative. It will contain encouragement and warning, messages of comfort and challenge.

It may be observed that this text stresses the importance of teaching God’s Word to God’s people (4:5, 6, 11, 13, 15).

**QUALITY #2** – An excellent minister will continually be nourished on the Word and doctrines of God. **4:6b**

The word “nourish” is one that means to train-up or nurture. Paul’s point is that when a minister is continually in the Word instructing others, he will be nourished himself. God nourishes His minister as he instructs in the Word of God and in sound doctrine.

Nourishment comes through the Word and the doctrines of God. Those who neglect the Word and doctrines of God are spiritually starving. The church that neglects these things will never become a pillar and support of the truth and neither will the individual.

**QUALITY #3** – An excellent minister will continually follow the Word and the doctrines of God. **4:6c**

The relative clause “which you have been following” is critical to showing us that the excellent minister not only instruct others in the Word and feeds himself on the Word, but also obeys or follows the Word of God.

The verb “you have been following” is perfect tense in Greek. What this means is that the excellent minister will be one who follows the Word and the doctrines of God from some point in the past and continues to maintain the same obedient focus at the present and into the future. The word “follow” is an intense word which speaks of a close following, an intense tracing or investigation (Smith, p. 341).

What I understand Paul to mean here is that an excellent minister will be one who carefully investigates and closely follows the Word and the doctrines of God.

**QUALITY #4** – An excellent minister will continually have nothing to do with worldly fables. **4:7a**

The word for fables is the word “muthos,” from which we get our English word myth. A myth is a story or narrative that is pure fiction and fable. It is something that is not fact (Smith, p. 297).

The word “worldly” is one that refers to things profane that are not in line with the hallowed Word of God (*Ibid.*, p. 79). The verb “have nothing to do” is an imperative, a command and it is a word that means to beg off or to excuse oneself from something in the sense of avoiding and refusing it (*Ibid.*, p. 340).

The point is that an excellent minister will be one who will walk away from and get out of any discussion that is moving into arenas that are fictitious and fables being presented as fact. This particular type of thing is common among old women. He will examine everything in light of Scripture.

Paul had the highest regard for older women. In fact, he will point out that it is the job of the church to view older women as mothers (5:2). The particular word used here for “old women” is not the same as in 5:2. The word here speaks of a person whose custom is to tell old wives’ tales or myths of older women which are non-factual.

Paul particularly has in mind things that pertain to theology. When you hear someone start propagating their fictitious religious beliefs, the excellent minister will avoid it and refuse to listen to it.

**QUALITY #5** – An excellent minister will continually discipline himself for the purpose of godliness. **4:7b-8**

A godly man or woman will be a disciplined man or woman. The word “discipline” is *Gumnaze* (γυμναζε) from which we get our English word *gymnasium*. The word literally means to exercise or train the naked body.

Now Paul was not against physical exercise. As one commentator observed, I have traveled to the places where Paul ministered. Most of these places he traveled to by foot. When I see the rugged terrain and the mountains he climbed to get to some of these places, I know Paul was a man in excellent shape.

The context gives us a clue as to what Paul has in his mind. There were some who were teaching that through ascetic denials of the body, such as “don’t marry” or “abstain from certain foods,” one really reached a great level of spirituality (4:3). Paul is saying when compared to godly discipline, any discipline of the body is only of little profit. One may shed some pounds, one may have a good look about him, but it won’t change the fact that he will still face God someday. In fact, that is exactly what Paul says in **verse 8**. One who disciplines himself in godly things is one that does what is profitable in this life and in the next.

**QUALITY #6** – An excellent minister will continually labor and strive in his own life and the life of the church. **4:10**

The word “labor” is one that speaks of work that is so strenuous that it brings one to the point of fatigue (Smith, p. 254). The word “strive” is one that speaks of a fight or struggle or competition that can bring a prize (*Ibid.*, p. 8). J. Oswald Sanders said, “If a leader is unwilling to pay the price of fatigue for his leadership, it will always be mediocre. True leadership exacts a heavy toll on the whole man (p. 175, 169).

Paul never paints the picture of being an excellent minister as being easy. He paints it as a tough, lonely, difficult and hard struggle.

Now notice carefully why we struggle—because of our hope in the Living God. The church is to be a pillar and support of the Living God (3:15). Even when the world is so undisciplined, we strive to be disciplined, because this is the way the Living God would have us be and someday we will be with Him. He is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. What this means is that Jesus Christ is the Living God and the Savior, and He has made it possible for all to be saved; but specifically He is the Savior of the believer.

Key questions worth asking:

1. Am I dedicated to the Word of God?
2. Am I disciplined in the things of God?
3. Am I obedient to the will of God?