

In his essay "Sinsick," theologian Stanley Hauerwas explores the notion of authority using a medical analogy.

If a medical student told his advisor, "I'm not into anatomy this year, I'm into relating" and asked to skip anatomy class to focus on people, the medical school would reply, "Who in the [heck] do you think you are, kid? ... You're going to take anatomy. If you don't like it, that's tough."

Hauerwas delivers his crucial point by saying:

"Now what that shows is that people believe incompetent physicians can hurt them. Therefore people expect medical schools to hold their students responsible for the kind of training that is necessary to be competent physicians. On the other hand, few people believe an incompetent minister can damage their salvation."

Last week we saw in our passage (1 Tim 4:11-16)... that spiritual exercise is MORE important than physical exercise. That is because spiritual exercise affects us for eternity. ... **Spiritual** well-being is MORE CRUCIAL than our **physical** well-being. Spiritual concerns have ETERNAL consequences.

So... let me take this a logical step further. (See if you agree.) Bad preaching is more deadly than bad surgery. ... Or a substandard pastor can do more harm than a substandard physician. ... [P A U S E] ...

(You say: "where are you going with this... Pastor? ... Hang with me for just a moment.) ... The need for formal structures of training... hierarchy... and accountability in **medical** schools and medical boards is obvious... because we don't want our medical doctors to simply be popular or relatable. We want them to practice medicine correctly and truthfully... to

participate in a medical tradition broader than their own untested schemes... and to serve under the authority and oversight of others. So why should anyone be frivolous and NON-discerning with a person that they entrust with care of their eternal soul...? ... [P A U S E] ...

My purpose with the message today is to elicit such a concern in those who I have the privilege of being their pastor... and (if you are watching or listening online)... for you to have this concern for your local pastor.

(Now) I want to confess something to you about our passage today... and it is this: I tried very hard... to find a different approach to these verses. ... I didn't want to preach a message that seemed (to me) to be so self-serving. And it might seem *that way* to some of you. (You see) the title of this message is: "*How to Pray for Your Pastor.*" Being a pastor is such an enormous responsibility... and I am confident that anyone who sees the need to be as discerning about the person they entrust their soul to – will want to pray for me.

As I considered how self-serving this might be... a quote from J Vernon McGee came to mind. "*As the pastor grows – so grows the church!*" (That is the underlying message of our passage today. "*As the pastor grows – so grows the church!*") ... So... thank you Dr. McGee. Now I don't feel so absorbed. If today's verses (and my pleading) motivate you to take on such a monumental prayer assignment... it could make a vital difference in the ministry of our church!

I count on your prayers... and I cannot even begin to give enough thanks to the many who (already) pray for me. By God's grace and your prayers... I am sustained in ministry.

Related to the confession that I have already made... let me (also) confess to you *how intimidated I feel* in preaching a passage like this. That is because there are three possible ways for a listener to respond to it. Two of them are unacceptable. Only the third is an appropriate response.

The **first** response is for the listener to critically shake an accusatory finger at me for not measuring up (to the fullest degree.) I will tell you right now that I don't. These verses will give anyone (who is so inclined)... plenty of ammunition for coming up to me afterwards and saying: "*Look! See here? This is what you should be...!*"

The **second** (and perhaps far less likely) response that I hope no one will make... is to study these verses and say: "*My... my... isn't it wonderful that we have a pastor who so completely embodies these principles...?*" ... It is as I just said... that I have not fully arrived and completely live up to these standards. These verses show that I need to grow. ... AND... "*As the pastor grows – so grows the church!*"

So... the **third** (and only appropriate) response is to study these verses... and be *struck* by them with a God-given *conviction*... to pray *regularly*... and *diligently*... that I would be making steady (and observable) *progress* in each area. ... You deserve nothing less from the person who is charged with the well-being of your ETERNAL soul.

So... turn with me (now) to our passage... as we continue our study through Paul's first letter to Timothy.

1 Tim 4:11-12

Timothy had been given a very difficult ministry. He was a man (probably in his mid-30's.) Paul had left him in this church after Timothy had travelled with Paul for 15 years around the Roman Empire... planting churches. So here is Timothy - in his mid-30's... dealing with problematic leaders in the church... (who were older than Timothy... and had been in leadership for quite a while... already.) And Timothy was there to CONFRONT and correct their errors. (Look back at Paul's opening of this letter to Timothy.)

1 Timothy 1:3-4 (ESV)

³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

That was a tough assignment for a young man. Timothy needed to employ a lot of wisdom... so he wouldn't arouse the ire and opposition from the whole church. And so... in this environment... Paul is explaining to Timothy how to be a successful pastor. ... We will even get a sense for how we should define "ministry success."

In order for Timothy to have success... he had a certain handicap to overcome. Looking at Paul's instruction (here in verse two)... and in other places in Scripture... it is easy for us to get the idea that Timothy was a little shy. Certainly he was not as assertive as the impression we get of the fiery Apostle Paul.

1 Corinthians 16:10-11 (ESV)

¹⁰ When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. ¹¹ So let no one despise him. Help him on his way in peace, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers.

Looking at verse 11 of our passage... Timothy is told that he must “**command** and teach these things...” (This would not be something *easy* for a shy person to do.) ... However... Paul’s urging Timothy to “**command**” or “**order**” the Ephesian believers to respond a certain way... should be seen in its context. ... He did not intend for Timothy to adopt an authoritarian... autocratic leadership style. ... He merely expected him to adopt a confident demeanor... and lead the people *with strength of conviction*.

This leads me to the first thing I want to ask for prayer on my behalf. **#1. *Please pray for an appropriate boldness when it is needed*** (having... a strength of conviction... without being haughty and overbearing.) Pray that I can discern *when it is needed* and that *I would have the right kind*.

I usually prefer to **AVOID** confrontation... than to engage in it. It frightens me. So much can go wrong. It turns ugly so quickly. Sides get drawn... others become involved... misunderstanding abounds... friendships are lost... and my reputation in our small town gets trashed.

But any pastor who avoids all confrontation causes more damage than an incompetent surgeon. It eventually becomes necessary for every pastor (even “shy Timothy.”) So please pray that I will discern *when it is needed* and *that I would be bold* out of a strength of conviction.

The *competent* pastor is a minister who boldly declares the Word of God and the commandments of God. He does not allow the fear of men nor the danger of hardship stop him. He has been commissioned by the Lord and he stands in the strength of the Lord. Therefore, he knows that the Lord will

deliver him through all the dangers of life if he will only be faithful, if he will courageously declare the Word and the commandments of God.

Here is how I would paraphrase verse two: *“Timothy, you may not be able to control other people’s prejudice against you (that you are young), but you need NOT be intimidated. Overcome their prejudice by being exemplary in your speech and conduct.*

Timothy was handicapped by his young age. It caused people’s prejudice against him... and Timothy felt intimidated. ... One of my many deficiencies... is my poor administrative skills. You only need to set one foot in my messy office to know that... or attend any of our All-Leader’s meetings and watch my eyes grow wide when I am asked what my plans are for two months down the road. (This is why I need those all-leaders meetings. It has a lot of people with skills that I lack.) ... But yes... I do sometimes feel intimidated that someone might focus on my lack... and have a prejudice that any pastor worth his weight in salt would have no such lack.

I cannot control anyone’s prejudice... but I do need to follow Paul’s instruction to Timothy. He wrote: Overcome ministerial prejudice (concerning your deficiency) by being exemplary in speech and conduct. You wont control them (your flaws will set-off certain responses in people) but you can (and need to) control your speech and conduct. “Let and set...” “Let no one despise your youth – but set a good example before them.

#2. Please pray that my life would match my words. ... *“As the pastor grows – so grows the church!”*

Paul's words are actually: "*keep on becoming*" (*ginou*). ... Timothy must be constantly improving. ... And the first area for improvement that is mentioned is "speech." ... (I'm not – at all - surprised.)

If a minister gets himself in trouble... it is usually with his mouth. ... Some of us just plain talk too much. ... People are always waiting for the pastor to pause... so they can say something. ... Along with too much talk goes the inability to listen — making it easier for us to say dumb things.

Paul writes: "*Timothy... you are to show people what a self-controlled tongue is...*" That is of first importance for the preacher. "*When words are many, sin is not absent*" (Proverbs 10:19). "*He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame*" (18:13). "*The mouth of a fool feeds on folly*" (15:14). "*The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil*" (15:28). "*The lips of the righteous know what is fitting*" (10:32). "*He who guards his lips guards his life*" (13:3).

Along with being exemplary in speech... Timothy is to be an example in conduct. "Speech and "conduct" go together... because they are both observable. Exemplary conduct has to be in the day-in... day-out... humdrum of existence — at the gas station... in the grocery line... going into the post office wearing a facemask (even though I am not convinced of it's effectiveness.) And by the way... I do... simply because I do not want to harm the testimony of Christ. Someone (who holds a more vigilant view regarding facemasks) might see me and know that I am a pastor. I don't want them to think less of the Christ that I follow... and my relationship to Him. Paul asks Timothy to go beyond normal conduct. Don't demand your rights if it might stir controversy.

Paul writes that a pastor must set a good example in two areas – speech and conduct. You say: “*Hold on Pastor... I count FIVE. There are three more. You left off “love”... “faith”... and “purity. Verse 2 says ‘be an example in speech... conduct... love... faith... and purity...’*”

No. I am not subtracting from Scripture. (You see)... the last three qualities are what speech and conduct must contain. “*Timothy... exemplify speech which is full of love... faithfulness... and purity. And make sure your conduct is (also) full of love... faithfulness... and purity...*”

The word faith (here in verse two) carries the meaning of “faithfulness.” (You may have noticed my saying “faithfulness” instead of how the ESV reads (“faith.”) ... I did that on purpose. “Faith” here does not refer to belief... but to unswerving commitment. It refers to the trust and dependability that should be shown in all of life’s relationships and responsibilities. A pastor must not be unreliable... breaking promises.

By cultivating these kinds of personal qualities... Timothy (and any pastor) will offset people’s prejudices against them. I need your prayers.

#1. Please pray for an appropriate boldness when it is needed

#2. Please pray that my life would match my words

Next... Timothy is given a set of practical priorities to which he needs to devote himself entirely.

1 Tim 4:13

Notice the centrality of the Scriptures (here.) Ministering the Word was not something Timothy was to do after he had done other things. It was to be

the most important thing he did. A congregation meets to hear the Word of God... and to implant it in their individual hearts and daily lives. ... All preachers are to be sure that the Word is accessible... effective... and understandable. ... No congregation ever gets beyond the need for the exposition of the Word of God.

A few years ago... at the height of what has been termed “the church growth movement” ... Many evangelical churches tried to blend evangelism outreach with worship service. (Of course) through the centuries many people have been saved in a worship service – and that is wonderful... but when the zeal for evangelism pushes the word of God out of the normal Sunday morning worship... a lot of spiritual deficiencies... abnormalities... and stunted growth occurs.

In our own Baptist churches of our association... there was a push to exclude the Bible from worship services... in order to grow the church. It was said that bringing your Bible to church would offend non-believers... who you are trying to attract. Sunday morning church services became MAN-Centered (please the unbelievers) instead of GOD-centered (focus on God’s Word and worship Him.)

Ed was a pastor who I went to seminary with. We also served together on the Board of the Conservative Baptists of Northern California and Nevada. He pastored a large and growing church in the San Jose area when we both attended a pastor’s conference in California. Ed found out that I preach from the Bible on Sundays... and he laughed and mocked me. He thought that I was so out of touch with what a pastor should be. Focus on

unbelievers. Don't do anything that would offend them. The Bible offends them.

#3. Please pray for the centrality of God's Word in all ministry.

1 Tim 4:14

What sticks out to me the most from verse 14... is that Paul was concerned that Timothy might hesitate or fail to use his spiritual gifts. He would never have told Timothy "*Do not neglect the gift you have...*" if Paul did not sense a danger that Timothy *might* disregard it. ... Further evidence that overlooking his gift was a real possibility... is that Paul brings it up again in his second letter to Timothy!

2 Timothy 1:6 (ESV)

⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,

This young pastor's confidence was wavering... and Paul sought to bolster him... by reminding Timothy that spiritual men had recognized God had called him to the ministry. For Timothy to bail out... would fly in the face of that clear consensus. "*Timothy... if you back out... you must first conclude that we were all lying.*"

Timothy's gift had been publicly recognized. Paul charges Timothy to remember that electric moment in the past... (somewhere with Paul in his travels... when the young man knelt... and Paul and the local elders fixed their hands on him... intoning prophecies and prayers about his giftedness and future ministry.)

The recollection of having hands laid on me by respected elders and pastors... when I was ordained... has given me peace and assurance in times when I have had doubts about my calling and ministry.

Endurance is an excellent thing to pray for your pastor! While there is consistent joy in ministry... there is also consistent hardship. It comes with the job! God wants us to be continually reliant on Him... finding solutions to impossible circumstances ONLY in Him... so we can confidently proclaim His enabling power to anyone. ... From personal experience of coming through intolerable situations... we can tell the couple who are ready to break up their marriage that God can bring them through. We can assure the man who just lost his job... and we can pray for the person in ill health.

Even though God has His Own reasons for why a pastor has so many challenges... OFTEN there is pressure to get-up and quit! Ministry often takes its toll on men who God has called. I admit that I have not seen any recent study... but the last time that I looked (a few years ago) the average stay for a pastor in a church was less than 3 years. (I am willing to say that I don't think that it is longer now.) ... 50% of the men and women who were in my graduating class in seminary... actually went into full-time Christian ministry. And less than 50% of those who did go into ministry... were still in ministry 5 years after graduating seminary. (This is the statistic for all American seminaries.) Please pray for my endurance.

- #1. **Please pray for an appropriate boldness when it is needed**
- #2. **Please pray that my life would match my words**
- #3. **Please pray for the centrality of God's Word in all ministry**

#4. Please pray for endurance

1 Tim 4:15

This is another call to Timothy to be totally committed to the task before him. ... But commitment in the Lord's service should (and always **will**) show - though it should never be showy.

The word *progress* is a Greek military term. ... It means "pioneer advance." It describes the soldiers who go ahead of the troops... clear away the obstacles... and make it possible for others to follow.

No pastor can lead his people where he has not been himself. "The pastor (or church member) who is not growing is actually going backward... because it is impossible to stand still in the Christian life. ... In his living... teaching... preaching... and leading... the minister must give evidence of spiritual growth. ... But what are factors that make spiritual progress possible?

So it is a call to diligent sweat. Timothy is to give all he has — all his life — to being godly... to the ministry of the Word... and to exercising his gift of preaching.

There is simply no success in ministry apart from hard work. ... (Now) I know that workaholism is a sin... and I must guard myself. I need a balance that God must give me. ... So here is something else for which I need your prayers. (So... we are up to five things (now) aren't we...?

1. Please pray for an appropriate boldness when it is needed

2. Please pray that my life would match my words

3. **Please pray that the centrality of God's Word in all ministry**
4. **Please pray for endurance**
5. **Pray for diligent sweat with a proper guard against workaholism**

1 Tim 4:16

The word "save" here... (*you will save both yourself and your hearers...*)... does not mean "save from Hell." (Timothy was already saved in that way.) The context shows us that this means "saved from heresy (false teaching.)"

The way to stay away from false teaching is by asking ourselves: "Do I really believe what I say I believe?" ... And "am I believing it more as time goes on?"

Please pray for progress – that my understanding of Biblical doctrine will grow. ... Doctrine has everything to do with life... because what we believe about God determines how we live. ... The more we know about God and His workings... the more we will love Him... and the better we will serve Him.

1. **Please pray for an appropriate boldness when it is needed**
2. **Please pray that my life would match my words**
3. **Please pray for the centrality of God's Word in all ministry**
4. **Please pray for endurance**
5. **Pray for diligent sweat with a proper guard against workaholism**
6. **Pray for progress in understanding Biblical doctrine**

There is a 7th and final thing that I will ask you to pray for me from our passage. This one rises from the passage as a whole. I saw it in the way that Chuck Swindoll summarized these verses.

7. Pray for me to keep the right aim. I must have God's definition of "successful ministry."

(Now) Here is Chuck Swindoll on this matter...

Paul urged Timothy to shift his perspective away from results, which can be fickle, to concentrate on what he could control: himself and his teaching.

Leading a church is not like running a business. A good entrepreneur constantly monitors success in order to determine what should be done next. Good results? Do more of the same. Bad results? Discover problems and implement change. Ministry methods, however, don't change.

Ministers have been commanded to employ **three** methods (which we have seen in today's passage. They are: set a godly example (4:7–12), preach and teach Scripture (4:13), and do both with unflinching faithfulness/persistence (4:14–16).

Now let me go back to Swindoll... who has more to say about "faithfulness (here.)

I have found that nothing good can come from concentrating on results, such as efforts to enlarge attendance, emphasizing the number of conversions, or referring often to weekly receipts. Good results can puff me up; bad results can make me feel like a failure...

The key to successful ministry, in a word, is perseverance. In fact, perseverance IS ministry success; the only way to fail in ministry is to back off and give up.

There's no better proof of an authentic ministry than perseverance. Ministers don't succeed in ministry because of brains, talent, charisma, or interpersonal skills. Ministers succeed by hanging tough through difficult seasons... Ministers persevere through disappointment... Successful ministers don't let dirty politics get the best of them. They refuse to quit when people criticize or run after

false teaching. Success for the minister is faithfully carrying out the duties of ministry... day in and day out... in season and out of season... year after year... regardless of the results.

I am more convinced than ever that a substandard pastor can do more harm than a substandard physician. So I plead with you to pray for me!

1. **Please pray for an appropriate boldness when it is needed**
2. **Please pray that my life would match my words**
3. **Please pray for the centrality of God's Word in all ministry**
4. **Please pray for endurance**
5. **Pray for diligent sweat with a proper guard against workaholism**
6. **Pray for progress in understanding Biblical doctrine**
7. **Pray for me to keep the right aim**

“As the pastor grows – so grows the church!”