

Sermon or Lesson: 1 Timothy 4:15c-16 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: The Results of Persistently Striving To Do Ministry God's Way

READ: 1 Timothy 4:15-16, with vv.6-14 for context

BACKGROUND:

- - Good ministers are to regularly teach the truths of the faith to their audience people. (v.11)
- - Having the overall goal of facilitating God's transforming impact upon the audience people, good ministers therefore should be utilizing an expository presentation approach, which reads, exhorts, and directly teaches God's Word to the people. (v.13)
- - In order to elicit and establish necessary credibility and respect from the audience people, good ministers of God's Word must also be living an exemplary life of godliness. (v.12)
- - Furthermore, those who do ministering to other people are to be striving to develop and enhance their skills and gifting to do ministry. (vv.14-15)
- - And they are to stay focused on shaping, developing, enhancing, and implementing their ministry activities in accordance with God's guidelines, which He has stated, listed, and directed in His Word. (v.15)
- - Now let's investigate further to find out what results can be expected from doing all these things good ministers are instructed by God to do.

v.15 - READ

[Lesson Question: What are the probable group dynamics that make it important for everyone to be able to see the progress the minister is achieving in improving his or her ministry functioning?]

SECTION POINT: Those persons who minister to others are to let their progress show in improving their ministry functioning.

"so that everyone may see your progress"

- - Being a minister of Christ Jesus is in most cases a highly visible job, mainly because the minister is standing in front of a group of people and telling them how they should live their lives.
- - These two phenomena combine to create conditions in which the group people are highly motivated and naturally compelled to closely watch and critique the life and the ministry functioning of their minister to ensure that they both match what the minister is telling them how to live and behave.
- - This close critiquing observation is like the group people are watching their minister through binoculars or a huge magnifying glass all the time, even in casual and informal situations.
- - Although most of the group people do not expect perfection from their minister, they do however expect the minister to be living and functioning at a sufficient level of

godliness while over time displaying measurable progress towards further spiritual maturity.

- - From this last phrase in verse 15, God is saying that there is significant value and importance in the group people detecting and observing that their minister is successfully and effectually applying the biblical principles that he or she is teaching in his or her own life.
 - - This visible evidence of authentic spiritual growth gives credibility to both the minister and the Word he or she is promoting.
 - - Additionally, a good example of how to conduct oneself in doing ministry is being modeled for the group people to easily see. (v.12)
 - - Therefore, the minister needs to let show the progress and advancements he or she is making in carrying out his or her ministry functioning.
 - - For any progress that is internal, personal, unobservable, or undisclosed, the minister should endeavor to make it "external, plain, apparent, and public". (Strong's #5318)
 - - Through the progress to improve his or her ministry functioning, the minister is encouraging and supplying motivation for his or her group members to emulate his or her progress. (Hebrews 10:24)
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v.16 - READ

[Lesson Question: What are the implications of "watch your life and doctrine closely"?]

SECTION POINT: Those persons who minister to others are to engage in ongoing comprehensive self-examination and self-correction.

v.16a - "**Watch your life and doctrine closely.**"

- - To be God-approved, those who function as a minister of Christ Jesus (v.6) should continuously be "watching [their] life and doctrine closely".
- - "Watching your life closely" would certainly then involve engaging in ongoing self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-critiquing.
- - This ongoing self-examination should be comprehensive, in areas such as: one's ministry functioning; inner thinking; speaking; behaviors; motives; attitudes; agendas; priorities; and treatment of other people, one's spouse, family members, ministry supervisors, peers, co-workers, subordinates, constituents, and etc.
- - Furthermore, this ongoing self-examination should include one's theology, Bible interpretation, doctrines, Bible knowledge, ministry philosophy, preaching and/or teaching method, obedience, teachability, dedication, devotional disciplines, prayer life, flexibility, service, and etc.
- - Of course, in all of these regards the utmost goal is to maximize one's genuine conforming to God's standards, which are clearly specified throughout Scriptures.
- - Therefore, self-correction will need to be initiated, implemented, and completed for every aspect that is identified in one's life as needing to be changed.
- - Inappropriateness, hypocrisy, and masquerading in one's performing of ministry functioning are unquestionably forbidden by God here and are counterproductive to achieving ministry credibility and effectiveness.

v.16b - READ

[Lesson Question: Analyze and develop the implications as to the results that can be expected if the directives in these verses are followed.]

SECTION POINT: God can and will bring positive results when ministry is conducted comprehensively in His way.

v.16b - "**Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.**"

- - God does not intend nor approve that improving of one's ministry skills and functioning only occur for a short time and then are discontinued.
- - No, God wants improving of one's ministry skills and functioning to be lifelong - "persevere in them", "remain" in them and "continue" in them. (Strong's #1961)
- - God even supplies here a major reason for persevering in improving of one's ministry skills and functioning - because those ministry improvement efforts will facilitate the result of God "saving" or "delivering" or "protecting" those persons being ministered to. (Strong's #4982)
- - In other words, God can and will use one's ministry functioning if the minister strives to comprehensively conduct himself or herself in accordance with what God prescribes.
- - God can and will bring positive eternal results from one's ministry functioning if it is done in His way. (cf. Psalms 1:1-3; Galatians 6:9-10)
- - These positive eternal results will be an invaluable never-fading blessing to those persons being ministered to.
- - Furthermore, God will cause blessings to also come back personally upon those doing the ministering if they are striving and persevering in doing ministry in God's way.

BIG IDEA: Persistently striving to comprehensively doing ministry in God's way will result in the producing of long-term significant impact and blessings upon those being ministered to and upon those doing the ministering.

APPLICATIONS:

- - For those of you who are doing ministering to other people, are you making progress in personally maturing spiritually, as well as in improving your ministering functioning?
- - Is your progress substantial enough to be evident to other people around you and to those you are ministering to?
- - Are you maintaining the priority of striving to improve in both of these regards?
- - Or do you right now need to recommit and reinvigorate your self-improvement efforts personally and/or ministerially?

- - For those of you who are not doing ministering to other people, why is that?

- - Why not start doing ministering to other people so that both you and they will be greatly blessed by God and long-term?
 - - Every day that you hesitate is a lost opportunity to acquire more blessings for yourself and for others.
 - - This pursuit is more than well worth your time and effort.
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[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- - If those persons who are doing ministering to other people are instructed to "watch [their] doctrine closely", then what does this suggest or indicate about God's willingness to accept the teaching of doctrine that is formulated according to some person's own perspective that wanders or diverges from exactly what God says in His Word?

- - What does this indicate about how precise to God's Word our doctrines should be that we hold and teach?

- - What does this indicate about the actual reality of the results of our ministering efforts if we wander or diverge our theology and doctrines in any way from precisely what God states in His Word? Will we be actually helping any of our listeners find salvation, genuine spiritual growth, and subsequent authentic blessings from God? And will we be actually earning any authentic blessings from God for ourselves?

-- Given these considerations and realities, then what should be the most paramount priority of every person who teaches or preaches God's Word?

- - - - To be extremely sure that every single doctrine you are teaching, preaching, or promoting precisely and exactly aligns with what God says in His Word, using sound interpretation. (cf. 2 Timothy 4:3-4; 1:14)

- - - - Another important priority is to be sure that you are teaching, preaching, and promoting God's agenda as stated in His Word rather than your own agenda that is derived from any source outside of God's Word. (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:4)]

Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

"Strong's Greek Dictionary." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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