

## Training for Healthy Ministry: *Part 2*

### 1 Timothy 4:10-12

**Introduction:** Discipleship, and in particular discipling others, is uniquely similar to parenting. On this Mother's Day, we acknowledge, thank, and celebrate our mothers. Think about a mother's (or parents, but it's her day so we'll focus on moms) job in the life of her child: she is there at the beginning where the baby is totally dependent on her care. She bathes, feeds, protects, and cares for the infant, teaches the child to read, dress themselves, and ride a bike, and equips the adolescent to work hard, do chores, and drive with an eye toward releasing them to the world. The irony of all of this is that in doing a job well MAY mean that child leaves the home and starts a life somewhere else, with others reaping the benefit of the hours of lessons and life poured into them. Motherhood is selfless, sacrificial, tireless, often thankless, impactful, essential, immeasurable in terms of impact, and transformative. It is for good reason we stop and spend a day giving flowers, giving cards, calling, and eating take out from her favorite restaurant. Motherhood, like parenting, is a beautifully appropriate picture of what discipleship looks like in the church.

**Discipleship** is the means by which God intended to reach the nations with the mystery of Christ and to mature the saints. Just like parenting, it entails:

- **Personal** – though teaching can take place on a mass scale and relationships on a broader spectrum, the model of discipleship we see in Scripture is personal. Jesus had multitudes follow Him and taught/healed many, but He chose 12 in particular to pour into and train to release. Paul did the same with men like Timothy and Titus.
- **Life to Life** – building on the foundation of a personal relationship, discipling is a life-to-life venture, urging someone to follow us as we follow Christ. Parenting creates followers as we instruct through word and action, through training and modeling. We can do much through online mediums in relationships, but discipleship is best done in person, where those that follow us get a view behind the curtain, seeing us in public and home, when we are prepared and informally, in the best and worst.
- **Transferrable** – Viewing discipling this way means its transferrable to any culture, in any region, for all time. It's a principle that plays out no matter where you live and is the goal of missionaries and churches around the world, right now.
- **Perpetuating** – It unites us with what the church has historically done, what it does now, and what it will do for generations to come. It is God's plan in rural agrarian cultures to urban metropolitan ones, where technology still lags to the most integrated and advanced of systems. In other words, no matter what happens around us, no matter what advances in tech or mediums of communication, discipleship is still the primary method by which God radically changes the world through **making and maturing disciples**. It was in Thessalonica that news had spread about the work of **Paul and Silas**: *"These men who have turned the world upside down have here also (Acts 17:6)"*. Jesus changed the world through His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. The work of ministry and making disciples turned it upside down.

**Mode of Ministry** (4:10a)

*For to this end we toil and strive...*

Last week we took a look at the key phrase in 1 Timothy 4, which says "you will be a good servant of Jesus Christ." We looked at how that would have been narrowly applied to Timothy and to pastors but

broadly applicable to all those who engage in gospel ministry, which at its core is **discipleship**, both becoming more like Jesus and helping others do the same. Our great **confession** *is the fact that the mystery of godliness is found in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, His incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.* We are ready to point out false doctrine, to nourish ourselves on God's Word which produces **conviction and discernment**, and to train ourselves for the purpose of godliness, which is both a temporal and eternal value. This is was an axiom of the early church, accepted as true, and practiced both then and now.

Now Paul turns his attention to the **mode, motivation, means, and method of** ministry. He starts with showing that ministry is **hard work**. The two words complement each other to give full picture of the effort needed. Both are in the present, meaning both are **ongoing** in their exertion. The first, "toil", has to do with *laboring to the point of exhaustion*, while "strive" has to do with agonizing or struggle. Any parent will tell you that outside of working on their marriage, parenting requires constant and consistent hard work, a labor that is absolutely rewarding but one desires death to self daily. Paul expressed this throughout his writings in the epistles:

**He extolled the Thessalonians for their participation in ministry –**

**1 Thessalonians 1:2-3** - We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, <sup>3</sup> remembering before our God and Father your **work of faith** and **labor of love** and **steadfastness of hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ.

**He recognized Epaphras for laboring even when he could not be with people –**

**Colossians 4:12** - *Epaphras*, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always **struggling on your behalf in his prayers**, that *you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.*

**He himself knew the cost of entering into ministry –**

**Colossians 1:28-29** "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup> For this I **toil, struggling with all his energy** that he powerfully works within me.

Remember, this toil was not simply the gritty effort of a determined man, but came straight out of the grace of God (1 Cor. 15:10), which empowered him to work hard, harder than anyone else since he had a different power source than others.

**Why does it take this kind of mass effort to do the ministry of discipleship?** 1) lessons are not typically learned easily or quickly; 2) We fight against the flesh, both our own and the ones we are seeking to help; 3) Training the mind and heart do not happen overnight. It would be much easier to simply train the externals or to get someone to obey. But training the heart means transformation over time, evaluating, confessing, and yielding to Christ, gaining a Biblical lens of thinking, and a willingness to follow.

Is it worth it? Ask any parent if watching your child make good choices to follow Christ after leaving your home if its worth it, and you'll have your answer.

*"If he is unwilling to pay the price of fatigue for his leadership, it will always be mediocre...True leadership always exacts a heavy toll on the whole man, and the more effective the leadership is, the higher price to be paid."*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, "Spiritual Leadership", p. 169, 175.

**Motivation in Ministry** (4:10b)

because we have our **hope** set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

If the **mode of discipleship ministry** is labor and toil, the **motivation in ministry is HOPE**. We have hope set on a **living God**, as set in opposition to the dead idols of the Ephesians or worthless ends that the world could offer. We have a living God who offers a living hope through the resurrection, meaning what we offer to people is far greater than any temporal goal or treasure that exists in this life. We serve the One who is Savior to all people in the sense that He gives and sustains life, shines the sun on the wicked and righteous and gives all people the opportunity to enjoy this world. God is by nature a Savior. He saves through unexplained and medical gains, healing those with cancer whether they are righteous or not. But He is **especially the Savior of those who believe**, meaning that we cling to a hope and labor to an end that calls people to life beyond the here and now, beyond what we hope for in this life.

**Why is hope so important in discipleship** (and parenting)? It reminds us that we are playing the *long game*, that change often comes slowly, and we are training certain things that will echo into eternity but may NOT show fruit in the short run. I haven't lived in my parents home in over 23 years, and they don't really get to see the payoff for their labor since 18 year old Jordan was more potential than actual. Hope allows us to **invest deeply** in people that may not show progress early on. **William Carey** labored as a missionary in India for 8 years before baptizing his first convert from Hinduism to Christ. It took **Adoniram Judson** over 9 years to see his first convert in Burma, and he had 18 followers after 12 years. What drove these men? Hope in the living God! What drives parents to continually training, teaching, and showing Christ to their kids, often even after they've left home? Hope in a living God! What drives our willingness to work hard with those that it seems like no progress is made or change is slow? Hope is a living God! God is working to save those He's called, and we want to invest in that which lasts eternally, so we labor and toil to that end in people, knowing that our labor is not in vain.

**Means of Ministry** (4:11)

*Command and teach these things.*

Not only is hard work the mode and hope the motivation, but **Biblical authority** is the means of ministry. Working through this passage this short verse seems like it's a throwaway or maybe a connector of thoughts, but upon examination it is **essential** in the work of ministry on behalf of Jesus Christ. Both these words are in the *present imperative*, which means they require ongoing action, and is a command given to those who are in ministry. The first has to do with transmitting a message by way of exhortation, command, or encouragement, the coming alongside of one. The second has to do with continual teaching, here having to do with verbally challenging and training the mind.

**Why is this so vital in our work of ministry?** What we are offering in the gospel through the hope of the living God is NOT just a good suggestion, but is life itself. We need to remember that the Bible is both **authority and sufficiency**, it carries the weight of God's truth and the ability to live it out. I think sometimes we can get embarrassed by God's Word with those who don't care much about it. We turn to our own wisdom, affability or intellect to win them instead of unleashing the sufficiency of Scripture. Far too often we have a version of the authority of Scripture as "**Yeah, but...**" I've noticed it more and more as we are given to watching more news and reading more articles that lay out conspiracies, opinions, and mixed facts about what is going on rather than investing time in knowing Scripture that

explains exactly what is going on. We work from Scripture first, then the 1<sup>st</sup> amendment. When challenged to think how Scripture plays into an argument or rant, we stop saying, "Yeah, but", and work to yield ourselves to it. We command and teach on the basis of authority, but NOT our own. We know the greatest tool that will transform the mind and heart is Scripture, whether or not the hearer thinks its boring or irrelevant.

### **Method of Ministry** (4:12)

*Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.*

Finally, after the mode of hard work, the motivation of hope, and the means of Biblical authority, we have the **method** of ministry which is the power of **example** or modeling life for others. The puritan Thomas Brooks said "*Example is the most powerful rhetoric.*" We have all been influenced powerfully by the example people have set for us. We may never remember a specific sermon or conversation, but the cumulative effect of how they lived in front of us impacts us every day. I've been watching a documentary called "The Last Dance" which replays the last season of the Chicago Bulls dynasty while Michael Jordan was still playing. He was a childhood icon when I was growing up, and I remember the slogan, "**Be like Mike, if I could be like Mike.**" He had it all, at least by all external accounts. But it was interesting to see that once it was popular to try to be like Mike, Michael Jordan could not handle the pressure of what that followed, and was one of the reasons he cut his career short in the midst of a championship run (he did return 2 years later to win 3 more championships, but the point is still there.

Leading by example does not have an age requirement. Timothy was most likely in his **late thirties** at the time of this epistle, with Paul being about 30 years his senior. The word for youthfulness here is the word "neotes", and was used of anyone under the age of 40. So even though culturally Timothy was considered 'young', that would not have stopped his being a leader. Instead of trying to lead by an iron fist or verbose speech, the best way, the most effective step for him to gain influence and lead others was to establish an excellent lifestyle, to walk as an example that was worthy to follow. I remember a pastor friend telling me he wouldn't hire a pastor right out of seminary, especially if he touted himself as being on the honor roll. Why? He did not want a know-it-all, but one who knew how to serve, to lead others without diplomas or medals. Timothy was to lead in the most effective way, by continually becoming an example to others that was worthy of following. This was to be clear in **5 areas**:

- **In Speech** - Our words reveal our heart (Matt. 12:34). In other words, you can learn a lot about a person by the way they talk, and how they talk. We are to speak the truth and put away falsehood (Eph. 4:25), and use our words for the building up and encouragement of another rather than corrupting words that tear down (Eph. 4:29). So a minister of the gospel should not be duplicitous with his words, but truthful in love. Words are used to confront, to teach, to encourage, to help, to comfort, not tear down and belittle. For someone like me that uses a lot of words (another way of talking a lot) and enjoys joking around, we must remember that where words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent (Prov. 10:19). It's amazing the effect our words have on others. They can light a whole forest with fire and discourage the strongest of person. But they can also be a source of light and fresh air to the weary soul. A minister of Jesus Christ knows the power of our words.
- **In Lifestyle** - A minister is NOT a hypocrite - "All talk, no action. Or worse...all talk, and the opposite action". A minister does not have to be perfect, but cannot put off that vibe either. he or she has a life that is continually learning, growing, and maturing toward Christ in every area

of life. NOTE: Most every person I've ever talked to have not looked to meet with the smartest or the most perfect person, but someone who loved Jesus, their spouse, kids, friends, and was willing to love them.

- **In Love** - Love is NOT primarily defined as emotion, but is not devoid of it. It is by definition a choice to be self-sacrificing, to be a servant, and care for others. If you want to lead and be a faithful minister of the gospel, serve others out of love and you will always have people who will follow.
- **In Faith** - This is not just faith in God, but a commitment to faithfulness, one who is not a flake. One of the commitments I made in my heart early in life was I wanted to be and follow faithful men, because that seemed to be the highest mark of greatness. Plenty of men have achieved great things only to trade them in for sinful habits that caused them to fall short in ministry.
- **In Purity** - Finally, no matter how old you are, a discipler is one who walks in purity, in his life, words, and actions, one who "*flees youthful lusts*" (2 Tim. 2:22) and is satisfied in the wife of his youth (Prov. 5:18-19).

Now, just think about how counter-cultural this list is: We strive to be people who yield to Christ in our speech, life, love, faithfulness, and purity, and model this for others while we call them to do the same. We are not calling them to some artificial greatness or achievement, but a transformation that is complete and works from the inside out.

None of these have to do with ability, giftedness, or personality. They come out of a growing nourishment of God's Word, maturing in both conviction and discernment, and rigorous training with hard work. Remember, we all follow people we strive to be like as we follow Christ, and none of us follow **perfect people, but consistent ones**. We follow those who set a standard, much like our parents did, or that we strive to do as parents.

So this morning, not only are we striving to be this, but to call others to this. ***What do we do with this?*** Find someone who fits this bill and meet with them. For coffee, for a project, serve together, share Scripture together, encourage each other. Pursue a younger person and simply spend time with them, listen to them, encourage them. That is how we continue to shape a culture of ministry through discipleship, all to the glory of God.

So moms, we love you, we are thankful for you, and grateful for the model of discipleship that you gave us.

**Questions to Answer:**

- Why do you think ministry, or discipleship, is so hard? Why does it take so much toil and work? Read Colossians 1:24-29. What is the goal of all ministry and relationship? What does it take to attain that goal?
- What role does the Word of God play in the relationships you have right now? Is it primary, secondary, or somewhere down the line?
- Where have you seen or had a positive experience in terms of someone leading by example? A negative one? How did you deal with each one?
- How do we grow as a church in doing gospel driven, disciple-making ministry? What role do you play in that growth?

**Ways to Pray:**

- Spend some time listing out the blessings you've seen and received from God this week, and thank Him for those.
- Pray for our government, not only for their salvation and our ability to lead a peaceful and quiet life (1 Tim. 2:2), but also that the "nations will fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth will fear your glory." (Psalm 102:15). Pray that all would lead with humility before God: President Trump, VP Mike Pence, for our Governor Gavin Newsom, and our Simi Valley Officials, Keith Mashburn (mayor), Mike Judge, and council women Cavanaugh, Luevanos, and Litster.
- Pray for our businesses and business owners in our church and town, not only that they would be able to continue their companies, but that their businesses would be a place that God is glorified and honored.
- Pray for our schools, and especially for Grace Brethren schools, as families navigate these waters. Pray for the wisdom of administrators who need to make hard decisions, both financially and with personnel, so that it will continue to be a place of transformative education and Biblical care, as an arm of our church that reaches into the lives of students and families alike with the mystery of Christ to the glory of the Father.
- Pray for our church, that we would both care deeply for the members here and shine brightly to those outside. Pray that we would have a culture of ministry and discipleship in Jesus Christ, and that more and more would join us.