

Essentials in the Ministry of the Lord [Lessons from the Pastoral Epistles]

I like to make it a habit to read through the Pastoral Epistles [1,2 Timothy & Titus] regularly and in one sitting so that the Spirit of God exhorts my soul with truths from Holy Scripture regarding the ministry of the Lord. I want to remain on track. I want to major on the essentials. I must prioritize what God tells me to focus on and avoid what He tells me to flee from.

I. PRAY

The minister of the Lord who serves in the ministry of the Lord must first be a man of prayer. Paul talks about how entreaties and prayers and petitions and thanksgivings should be made by all men. And in the worship context, Paul says that the men should lead in the prayers. The first essential and the most powerful force in ministry is when the minister of the Lord prays to His God for himself, his family, his flock, & the lost.

2. PREACH

The ministry of the Lord must include faithful, fervent, biblical preaching. The Apostle Paul repeatedly tells both Timothy and Titus to 'instruct' and to 'teach' and to 'exhort' and to 'preach'. These are not optional. They cannot be negotiated or sidelined. The ministry of the word must be preeminent and paramount. If a man does not rightly handle the Word of God, then he is to be ashamed and will be shamed by God one day. God exhorts His men to preach the Word and to speak and exhort with all authority and to speak things which are fitting for sound doctrine. This includes instructing in faithful doctrine and the reproof of those in error. God's men must exhort in truth and refute those who contradict. Faithful men preach the Word.

3. PROTECT

The ministry of the Lord includes the shepherding of the sheep of God. God's men must protect God's flock. A sheep without a shepherd will soon be hunted and hounded and mauled by predators. Sheep are helpless without protecting and watchful shepherds. So the ministry of the Lord must include the protecting of God's people from false teachers, from false doctrine, from the love of money, from wandering into useless arguments and speculations, and from sin. As Paul told Timothy, 'keep yourself free from sin'; so this should be the shepherd's reminder to God's people repeatedly. Shepherds must protect by warding off wolves ferociously and by protecting the flock tirelessly. False doctrine abounds. Protect the sheep diligently!

4. DEVELOP

The ministry of the Lord demands the developing, training, and shepherding of leaders. Developing leadership in Christ's church is a paramount essential in every local congregation. Paul sent Titus to set in order what remained and to appoint elders in every city. Paul told Timothy to take what he learned from Paul and to invest in other faithful men. However, ministers of the Lord must not lay hands on a man too quickly lest the unseen sins become exposed and shame the flock and the Lord and His gospel. Paul traveled with many companions; some abandoned him and others remained with him. Nevertheless, God's work thrives and spreads as qualified, holy, faithful, sober-minded men take the Word and teach it.

5. HOLINESS (IN LIFE)

The ministry of the Lord must be pure. Unholy ministers bring a reproach to Christ and His gospel and His church. Paul tells Timothy to keep himself pure and to guard himself and his life and his doctrine. This holiness in the ministry is at least two-fold: the fleeing from sin and impurities and the following and relentless pursuit after holiness and Christ Himself. Unholiness spreads like a plague and infects the whole lump. Faithful servants in the ministry must reject sin and pursue righteousness, faith, love and purity. Paul told Timothy to be absorbed in God's things and to pay careful attention to himself and to his doctrine and to persevere in them.

6. ENDURE (HARDSHIP)

The ministry of the Lord always brings hardship and so God instructs ministers in His gospel-work to endure. Paul tells Timothy to fight the good fight and to keep the faith. Hardship comes not only from those outside the church who hate Christ and His gospel but also, and perhaps most painfully, from inside the church. Paul knew what it was to have faithful comrades in ministry turn on him and oppose gospel work. He had fellow laborers fall in love with the world and desert him. He had to endure slanders, ridicules, mockings, sufferings, beatings, and persecutions. Of course these will come! But God's ministers in the work of the Lord must be strong in the grace of Christ and suffer hardship as a soldier of Christ Jesus!

7. REJOICE (IN GOSPEL)

An essential in the ministry of the Lord includes the remembering and the rejoicing in the saving gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. God has saved His people and called them with a holy calling, not by men's works, but according to His sovereign purpose and grace! The one Mediator between God and men is the man Christ Jesus. He gave Himself as a ransom! The God-breathed Scriptures reveal the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. This Christ gave Himself for sinners to redeem them from every lawless deed and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession. Believers then look for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. The ministers of the Lord must remember this, rejoice in this, warm their hearts in this, enflame their love for Christ in this and be overcome by Christ's ravishing love.