

R. SCOTT PACE & JIM SHADDIX

# EXPOSITIONAL LEADERSHIP



SHEPHERDING GOD'S PEOPLE FROM THE PULPIT

“What an invaluable book! Every pastor experiences challenges in trying to do it all: leading the church, preaching week by week, and helping people amid the ups and downs of life in a fallen world. Scott Pace and Jim Shaddix provide explicit biblical wisdom and immense practical help for every pastor who wants to do all of the above with faithfulness, joy, and love for God and the people he calls us to lead.”

**David Platt**, Pastor, McLean Bible Church, McLean, Virginia; Founder, Radical; author, *Don't Hold Back*

“In *Expositional Leadership*, Jim Shaddix and Scott Pace combine experienced pastoring with years of training others for the pastorate to give insight into how the ministry of the word contributes to the fulfillment of the local church's leadership, preaching, and pastoring responsibilities. This needed book shows how congregational ministry empowers the pulpit and how faithful pulpit ministry is integral to congregational leadership and health. What many only discover from decades of ministry is captured and treasured here.”

**Bryan Chapell**, pastor; author, *Christ-Centered Preaching*

“What a timely and much-needed work. I do not know of another book like it. Bringing together in beautiful balance the work of leading, pastoring, and preaching, Pace and Shaddix show us how we can fulfill our holy assignment with integrity, competence, and joy.”

**Daniel L. Akin**, President, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“The sermon is by far the pastor's most influential leadership opportunity. In *Expositional Leadership*, Scott Pace and Jim Shaddix demonstrate how preachers can steward that opportunity in a manner that is spiritually beneficial to the congregation and consistent with the biblical calling of the pastor-teacher. This rewarding book is, in equal parts, a pastoral theology, a biblical rationale for expository preaching, and a solid philosophy of church leadership. *Expositional Leadership* offers valuable guidance for both the beginner pastor and the experienced leader.”

**Stephen Rummage**, Senior Pastor, Quail Springs Baptist Church, Oklahoma City; Professor of Preaching and Pastoral Ministry, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; author, *Planning Your Preaching*

“A biographer once said of John Calvin that the hardworking pastor and theologian assumed his whole ministerial labor was all about the exposition of Scripture. Everything centered on and flowed from exposition. In a similar spirit, Pace and Shaddix demonstrate how the numerous facets of pastoral ministry can and should be integrated by such a commitment. *Expositional Leadership* offers a model of pastoral ministry that allows the word of God to be the primary way a preacher leads, loves, and feeds the church. While there are many books on church leadership, homiletics, and pastoring, there aren’t many that demonstrate how all three should work together. I highly recommend this book and plan on using it in future events and courses.”

**Tony Merida**, Pastor for Preaching and Vision, Imago Dei Church, Raleigh, North Carolina; author, *The Christ-Centered Expositor*

“*Expositional Leadership* presents a threefold approach to pastoring, teaching, and preaching wherein leadership and pastoring are servants of preaching—not masters. This volume reenergizes leaders to respond to the actual needs of the church’s present-day challenges with powerful tools, and it does so without compromising the integrity of the eternal word or diminishing its authority. Jim Shaddix and Scott Pace’s *Expositional Leadership* is a book whose time has come for those dedicated to efficient and effective kingdom work.”

**Robert Smith Jr.**, Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University

“Many books on preaching today wrongfully separate preaching from the primary call of a pastor to ‘shepherd the flock of God that is among you’ (1 Pet. 5:2). What we need are trusted voices to push against this trend and skillfully demonstrate how preaching is a primary task of the pastor’s central calling. Pace and Shaddix are two of those voices. In *Expositional Leadership* they biblically and practically show how the preaching task is threaded through the shepherding call, not separated from it. Their insights are wise, helpful, and pastoral. Every pastor who desires to shepherd well through preaching should read this book.”

**Brian Croft**, Founder and Executive Director, Practical Shepherding

## *Expositional Leadership*



# Expositional Leadership

*Shepherding God's People from the Pulpit*

R. Scott Pace and Jim Shaddix

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## Introduction

# Leaders, Preachers, and Pastors

CHURCH LEADERSHIP IS CHALLENGING for a variety of reasons. Beneath the surface of a local church's culture is a complex history that can be difficult to see and assess. Every church body consists of people with various backgrounds, personalities, family situations, needs, and expectations. Often, there is also a wide range of spiritual maturity among members of the congregation that requires personal consideration and a versatile ministry approach. These challenges are compounded by the unforeseen circumstances and unexpected obstacles that pastors are constantly required to navigate as they attempt to lead the collective whole. Other pastors, as well as elders, administrative staff, and church leaders, can help shoulder some of the load, but leading a team and working with people creates additional dynamics that come with their own set of issues. In short, human beings are unpredictable, churches are complicated, and leadership is hard!

In addition to daily leadership challenges, pastors are always living under the pressure of the impending sermon. As soon as we step off the platform and emotionally exhale, the anticipation of the next message and the anxiety about its preparation begins to build. Even those of us who enjoy the process of sermon development recognize the ongoing mental and physical demands of preparing and preaching weekly messages (and sometimes more).

The sacred trust of delivering God's word is a sobering honor that we celebrate with gratitude and embrace with reverence. But if we're honest, the most difficult challenge related to preaching is not the never-ending process of sermon preparation or the unique blend of exhilaration and exhaustion that comes with delivering a message. It's the overwhelming disappointment we feel as we watch our people seemingly disregard the truth of God's word that we so desperately strive to communicate to them. Their lives continue to exhibit the same broken pieces and patterns, and the church body feels unmoved and unmotivated. Our initial misguided feelings of betrayal eventually give way to frustration and discouragement as we begin to struggle with doubts related to our preaching or with questions concerning our calling and our church. Preaching, as enjoyable as it is, can become a real struggle.

If leadership and preaching aren't difficult enough, the daily grind of pastoring can make ministry feel impossible and, on some days, miserable. The strain on our families, barrage of unrealistic expectations, constant demands on our time, spiritual weight of empathy for our people, and apparent lack of appreciation can absolutely debilitate even the most gifted pastor. Indeed, apart from God's sustaining grace and his supernatural strength, pastoral ministry is unbearable and unmanageable. As we struggle to persevere, we long to see God work in our congregants' lives and desperately pray for his fresh work in our own. These earnest desires, along with the constant demands, make pastoring both a humbling privilege and a heavy burden.

Overall, these three core components of our ministries—leadership, preaching, and pastoring—are all essential aspects of our calling. Although most of us recognize the inherent challenges that come with each of them (and certainly don't need a book to remind us), it's easy to overlook how interrelated and mutually dependent they are on one another. As a result, we can also fail to see how addressing them collectively can simplify their individual challenges. Most importantly, if we fail to recognize how Scripture weds leadership, preaching, and pastoring together, we may find ourselves attempting to fulfill each of their related responsibilities without actually accomplishing any of them.

## Surveying the Landscape

The unhealthy differentiation between leadership, preaching, and pastoring is also reflected in the broader landscape of contemporary ministry. In the same way that we compartmentalize these three core components of our calling, ministry resources typically address them separately as well. For example, leadership books often focus on principles and processes but rarely address practical aspects of pastoring. Similarly, pastoral resources provide helpful insights for our various roles and responsibilities but give little to no attention to preaching. And homiletics resources are designed to enhance our interpretation and communication skills, but they are largely silent on pastoral and leadership matters. While each of these subjects certainly warrant dedicated volumes, their artificial isolation and borderline exclusion of one another ignores the mutual dependence they share. This is one reason why expositional leadership is so important—it helps us integrate these foundational concepts.

But our segregation of these essential ministry components is not just theoretical—it's practical. In each of our ministries we all have responsibilities that require us to allocate time for sermon preparation, pastoral care and counseling, and organizational leadership (strategic scheduling is a must for every faithful pastor). Yet, some pastors may recognize preaching as a ministry strength and devote an unhealthy portion of their time to sermon development while they neglect pastoral care for the flock. Others may be gifted in the area of leadership and overemphasize vision and strategy to a point that it devalues people and sees them as an obstacle to overcome or a necessary evil to be put up with. Still others may not see themselves as gifted communicators and thus dedicate themselves to caring for the flock but minimize the amount of time spent in sermon preparation.

While we all have areas of strengths and weaknesses, and each of us has different passions and preferences, we must avoid concentrating on one core component of ministry at the expense of another. However, this is not simply a balance problem; it's also a blending problem. This

is another reason why expositional leadership is crucial—it helps us determine how these core components of ministry overlap and how we can synthesize them together for maximum ministry impact.

Sadly, this unhealthy segregation of duties is not only obvious in our ministry approach and the related resources but is even more apparent in many ministry failures that occur. Pastors typically don't lose their churches because they suddenly adopt some errant doctrine or stumble into a moral failure. To be sure, these are not uncommon, but they are not the most frequent source of ministry collapse. Rather, pastors are dismissed and churches split over unwise and unhealthy leadership. Further, pastors often resign because churches can become riddled with internal turmoil due to a lack of spiritual maturity, which ultimately reflects an anemic preaching ministry. Likewise, when the people don't feel cared for and the sermons seem detached from their lives (no matter how exegetically accurate they are), a pastor can lose the trust and confidence of the congregation, forcing him to eventually leave.

When these types of situations begin to unravel, we find ourselves focusing on the symptoms instead of identifying and resolving the source of the problems. In other words, we point the hose at the smoke instead of the fire, which leaves the ministry in ashes, the people with scars, and the pastors severely burned. In each of these common scenarios, the failure in one core component leads to struggles in the others. But the opposite can also be true, and this is yet another reason why expositional leadership is critical. It helps us to leverage each component for the strength and success of the others, thereby solidifying and safeguarding our ministry.

### **Establishing the Boundaries**

As we explore the concept of expositional leadership it is important to establish some doctrinal and philosophical boundaries. These theological guardrails can keep us out of doctrinal ditches and also serve as guides that will steer our conversation in the right direction. There are several theological convictions and commitments that undergird our perspective and ultimately guide our approach. Each of these

foundational truths feed and fuel the nature and necessity of expositional leadership.<sup>1</sup>

### *God, Salvation, and the Church*

We believe that the Creator of the universe is the one true, living, triune God who exists eternally in three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. He uniquely created people in his image (Gen. 1:26–27), but all of humanity was separated from him and condemned through Adam’s original sin (Rom. 5:12). God’s eternal plan of redemption was promised and pictured throughout the Old Testament (Gen. 3:15), and it was accomplished according to the Scriptures in the person and work of Christ the Son through his virgin birth, sinless life, substitutionary death on the cross, and bodily resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3–4). By faith, all those who repent and trust Christ as their Lord and Savior are personally and eternally saved (Rom. 10:9–10), adopted into God’s family (1 John 3:1; Gal. 4:4–7), and established as new covenant members of Christ’s body and bride, the church (Eph. 5:25–33). Believers are called to live and serve within a local community of faith that is conforming them, individually and collectively, into the likeness of the Son (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 4:12–16). Ultimately, as the fulfillment of God’s redemptive plan, this life transformation is the goal of expositional leadership.

### *The Sacred Scriptures*

God has revealed his eternal nature and divine power through the magnitude and majesty of his creation (Rom. 1:20). More specifically, he has disclosed his personal nature through the living Word, Jesus (John 1:1–14; Heb. 1:3), and his written word, the Scriptures (Ps. 19:7–9; 2 Pet. 1:20–21). The Bible is the inspired, infallible, and inerrant word of God and therefore is sufficient as the sole and supreme authority of

1 In John Stott’s classic *Between Two Worlds*, he sets forth five core convictions that establish the theological foundations for preaching. He argues that our homiletical approach will be determined by our convictions about God, Scripture, church, the pastorate, and preaching. John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 92–134.

everything that pertains to life, faith, and godliness (2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:3). Through the power and presence of God’s Spirit, believers are able to understand and respond to the Scriptures (John 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:12–16). God’s word is also the primary means by which his people are sanctified (John 17:17; 1 Pet. 2:2). Therefore, the word of God is the source and substance of expositional leadership.

### *Pastoral Leadership*

While God’s people have equal worth and spiritual standing before the Lord, he has given leaders to the church to serve and equip his people (Eph. 4:11–12). In particular, he has established the office of pastor (or elder) within the church for those who are called and capable according to biblical qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9). As God’s appointed undershepherds, pastors are called to serve Christ, the chief shepherd, by leading and feeding his people (1 Pet. 5:1–4; Acts 20:28). Pastors have stewardship responsibilities for the spiritual health of the church, bear a unique burden for God’s people, and are called to exercise oversight in a loving and responsible manner (Heb. 13:17). These ordained responsibilities serve as the impetus for expositional leadership.

### *Expository Preaching*

A primary, and arguably the most important, responsibility of a pastor is to “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2). The success of his ministry will largely be measured by his faithfulness to teach the Scriptures accurately and effectively (2 Tim. 2:15). The preaching philosophy and practice that most faithfully honors the Bible as the word of God, allowing the text of Scripture to determine the substance and structure of the sermon, is exposition. This systematic approach, which regularly preaches through books or extended portions of the Bible, includes the clear explanation, application, and proclamation of a passage of Scripture. In other words, “Expository preaching is the process of laying open the biblical text in such a way that the Holy Spirit’s intended meaning and accompanying power are brought to bear on the lives of

contemporary listeners.”<sup>2</sup> Since preaching is intended to be the central component of corporate worship and the Scriptures have the power to transform lives, the broadest congregational influence will occur when we preach to God’s gathered people (1 Tim. 4:13–16; see Neh. 8:1–8). As a result, expository preaching is the model and the means by which expositional leadership is accomplished.

### *Expositional Leadership*

Based on these doctrinal convictions and the foundation they provide, we can establish the concept and core components of expositional leadership.

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*Expositional leadership is the pastoral process  
of shepherding God’s people through the faithful  
exposition of his word to conform them to the  
image of his Son by the power of his Spirit.*

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Each component of this definition deserves a brief explanation.

- Expositional leadership is *pastoral* because preaching is the foundational and indispensable responsibility of those who are called to lead the church.
- Expositional leadership is a *process* because it is ongoing and continual. Leadership builds over time, not only in its leverage and influence but in its direction and progress.
- Expositional leadership involves *shepherding God’s people* because it considers a particular context and congregation that must be led and fed according to their spiritual needs.
- Expositional leadership occurs *through the faithful exposition of God’s word* because it requires the timeless truth of Scripture to be rightly interpreted and proclaimed.

2 Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 2017), 30.



- Expository leadership is intended to *conform the congregation to the image of God's Son* because its ultimate goal is the individual and corporate transformation of Christ's followers.
- Expository leadership is only possible *by the power of his Spirit* because preaching for real heart transformation is utterly dependent on his supernatural work.

This working definition and its corresponding explanations provide the basis for our approach to expository leadership in the chapters that follow. Each of the elements that comprise the definition are woven into various expressions of pastoral leadership through expository preaching.

### Charting the Course

Leadership is a multifaceted concept that includes various forms and functions, particularly within pastoral ministry. As we explore the concept of shepherding God's people through biblical exposition, there are six categories of leadership that can provide some structure to the conversation. Each chapter in this volume will focus on a specific aspect of pastoral leadership that can be leveraged through sermon development and delivery. The facets of leadership identified and discussed are not intended to be comprehensive, but, in our experience, they cover the most common (and essential) elements of pastoral leadership that should be employed through the faithful exposition of God's word.

The first chapter focuses on scriptural leadership. Here we aim to establish a biblical basis for a pastor's role in shepherding a congregation, the responsibilities it involves, the character and calling it requires, and the inseparable nature of expository preaching and pastoral leadership. We will also consider how scriptural leadership must be distinguished from secular leadership in its form, function, and focus—otherwise, our preaching simply qualifies as motivational monologues, religious pep talks, or moralistic rants.

Chapter two explores the spiritual leadership that we should exert through our preaching. Ultimately, our faithful exposition is intended

to result in spiritual transformation for us and for our congregations. Our ability to provide spiritual leadership depends on our own spiritual growth and maturity, which is enhanced through sermon development and expressed through sermon delivery. Beyond our own spiritual progress, a healthy pulpit ministry also determines the spiritual vitality and vibrancy of the church. In this chapter we explore how individual and corporate discipleship can be accomplished through the sermon and how biblical exposition equips our people to study Scripture in their own spiritual disciplines and devotion.

In the third chapter we address strategic leadership and how our messages should be designed for our specific contexts and congregations. Exposition should always be grounded in the authoritative meaning of the divine author as expressed through the biblical writer. This hermeneutical conviction and commitment guides our understanding of how the text can be pastorally applied in various churches. Yet, in order to effectively mobilize our congregations, we must also contextualize our messages for them as a distinct spiritual community. Through faithful exposition we can cast vision for our people and challenge them with congregational initiatives and collaborative efforts to accomplish God's mission and fulfill his will for our churches.

Servant leadership is the focus of chapter four. Here, we'll consider how to cultivate and establish a culture of humility and service among our people through text-driven preaching. This is not simply accomplished by preaching on servant-related passages, but is primarily achieved through our pulpit demeanor and preaching style. As pastors, we must demonstrate a Christlike humility through our sermon delivery as we exhort, challenge, plead, and compel our congregations according to the truth of the passage. Our disposition should display a love for our congregation and our community that models a compassion for people and motivates our members to live on mission with a servant mentality.

Chapter five focuses on situational leadership through our preaching ministry. Every church inevitably goes through difficult seasons of trial and hardship. These can be some of the most important times in

the life of a church, and they require our careful consideration as we navigate them from the pulpit. People are looking for guidance and listening for truth that will anchor their hope in Christ, help them process circumstances through a biblical lens, and teach them how to respond accordingly. Whether it is a community tragedy or church crisis, we have the responsibility to preach with conviction and compassion as we shepherd our people through various situations with expositional messages.

The final chapter addresses sensible leadership in our preaching ministry. Too many churches have been damaged, too many ministries have been derailed, and too many pastors have been disqualified by the failure to exercise godly wisdom (and common sense) in preaching. Common pitfalls that seem obvious can actually become subtle traps that pastors fall into. As faithful preachers, we must avoid using our privilege to preach God's word on a soapbox by proclaiming our opinions, airing grievances, strong-arming the church, undermining others, or promoting ourselves. The pulpit is not a place for public arguments, political agendas, or personal ambition, so we must be careful to honor our calling and Christ's name through sensible leadership as his spokesmen.

Each of these six leadership concepts are essential to pastoral ministry and are best leveraged through our preaching ministries. They are practical areas that can help us weave leadership, preaching, and pastoring into a unified approach when guiding and feeding the congregations entrusted into our care. We pray that our journey together through *Expositional Leadership* will be one that deepens your walk and strengthens your work for our Savior!

# Scriptural Leadership from the Pulpit

*Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading  
of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.*

1 TIMOTHY 4:13

THOSE OF US WHO CHAMPION expository preaching are sometimes asked whether the Bible mandates such a practice. We hear questions like, “Where in the Bible are we commanded to preach expositional sermons?” or “Can the sermons in the Bible that were preached by the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles legitimately be categorized as expository?” These are fair questions. The oversight in them, however, is the assumption that one of the reasons we have the Bible is to provide us with a homiletics textbook or a compilation of great sermons. The truth is, neither is the case. In fact, most of the “sermons” in the Bible are just fragments or summaries of sermons, and the number of texts that offer instructions on how to preach are few.

So where do we find a biblical foundation for expository preaching? We find it mostly in the way the Bible describes how preachers in the Old and New Testaments went about their tasks. For example, we learn in Nehemiah 8:1–12 that understanding and explaining Scripture is critical for the corporate gathering of God’s people. We glean from Jeremiah 23:9–40 that God’s prophets are responsible for being in his

counsel to ensure that they say only what he says. We draw from Luke 4:16–21 that Jesus followed the rabbinic pattern in the synagogue of reading a passage from the Old Testament and then giving an exposition of it to the people, a pattern from which the apostles and the early church later took their cue.<sup>1</sup> And in 1 Corinthians, we see Paul describing himself as a “steward” of the gospel and refusing to compromise the message as he proclaimed the “testimony of God” (1 Cor. 2:1; 4:1). The common denominator in these representative passages is simply the responsibility of preachers to say—or uncover—what God says. That is exposition in its simplest form.

In addition to these descriptive references, the Bible also contains some imperatives regarding exposition. Peter says those with speaking gifts should “speak the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11), and that certainly includes preachers. But maybe the most concise and direct command regarding exposition is Paul’s instruction to Timothy: “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching” (1 Tim. 4:13). This charge reveals the important relationship between leadership, exposition, and pastoral ministry. Paul weaves instruction about preaching together with Timothy’s overall pastoral leadership, and he doesn’t make much of a distinction between them. In fact, he appears to imply that Timothy’s practice of public exposition of Scripture is the heart and the hinge of his leadership as a pastor.

The immediate context of this verse reinforces and further explains this interpretation. First Timothy 4:6–16 provides several critical principles involved in shepherding God’s people from the pulpit, and each of these reveals some intersection between leadership, pastoral ministry, and biblical exposition. At their core, these principles are what makes expositional leadership scriptural. As we’ll see from this passage, God’s word is not only supposed to be the source and substance of our messages but also prescribes the attitude and approach that we, as pas-

1 John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 123.

tors, are supposed to embrace in order to lead God's people through the faithful exposition of his word.

### **The Pastor's Motive Is the Master**

The reason many pastors fail at being leaders is that they want to be leaders. While that may sound strange, we must understand that leadership is not the ultimate goal or standard of success when it comes to gospel ministry. The plethora of books, conferences, seminars, and courses on the subject of leadership feeds a misguided passion in many pastors simply because the world has touted it as a quality and skill of the highest order that's worthy of our greatest effort. Gospel leadership, however, is quite different. The Bible is clear that the way to be a good leader is not by developing skills to influence people and command organizations. Rather, the way to be a good leader is to be a good servant (Matt. 20:25–28; Mark 9:35).

Living according to this curious economy of leadership doesn't start with a focus on serving others—it begins with serving the Master who established that economy, the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul expects that his young protégé desires to be such a servant: “If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 4:6). Here, being a servant isn't described with the term that emphasizes submission and subjection as a slave (*doulos*), but the one used more generally for someone who serves another in some useful way (*diakonos*; see 1 Cor. 4:1–2; 2 Cor. 3:6; 6:4). Paul assumes that Timothy aspires to such a role in his relationship with Jesus. Thus, it must be the motive of every pastor not first to be a leader of people, but to be a useful servant of the Master. Leading people well will follow serving Jesus well.

But how does a pastor offer such useful service to our Lord? Though there are numerous ways this work plays out in gospel ministry, Paul lays out specific qualifications for being a “good servant” of the Master. And this is where pastoral leadership and biblical exposition begin to intersect in this passage. He first says that such servanthood will be realized “if you put these things before the brothers” (1 Tim. 4:6). Paul

uses the term “these things” eight times in this letter to summarize the practical and doctrinal issues he’s been addressing, things like prayer, modesty, authority and submission, qualifications of pastors and deacons, and destructive legalism.

Like Timothy, every pastor must lead his people to believe rightly and live obediently when it comes to all the aforementioned issues and more. That begins with “put[ting them] before” the congregation through preaching and teaching. The language Paul uses here conveys the idea of gentle persuasion through humble reminders—the pastor lovingly explains and applies God’s word to his people so that they think rightly and live accordingly. Like a waiter, we serve our people nourishing meals; like a jeweler, we display before them treasured gems.<sup>2</sup> We are good servants of our Master if we lead well by preaching well.

Not only is the pastor a good servant when he preaches well but he preaches well because he learns well. Paul says Timothy’s service for Christ and leadership of God’s people intersect in his preaching ministry because he’s been “trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that [he has] followed” (1 Tim. 4:6). The idea of being trained is a metaphor for nurturing and tutoring children. Paul’s use of the present participle suggests that his concern is for Timothy to continue feeding himself spiritually so that he can be a good servant of Jesus by training his congregation in the faith.<sup>3</sup>

So often we hear of pastors who neglect the study of God’s word because of the many other pastoral responsibilities that demand their leadership. But studying God’s word for spiritual nourishment and preaching preparation contributes directly toward pastoral leadership! We lead well when we preach well, and we preach well when we study and learn well. When a pastor regularly pursues his Master by digesting the truth of his word, consuming his gospel and feasting on his rich doctrine, then he can lead his people to “know how [they] ought

2 John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 116.

3 Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 103.

to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). Then and only then can he be considered a “good servant” of his Master.

### The Pastor’s Goal Is Godliness

Leadership is not an end in and of itself; it naturally implies a destination. It’s kind of like application and illustration in a sermon—these elements serve as means to other ends. We don’t just do application in our sermons; we apply *something*. We use application to demonstrate how the truth is to be lived out. We don’t just put illustrations in our sermons as rhetorical eye (or ear) candy; we put them in to illustrate *something*. We use them to either help us explain or apply the truth of the text. Neither application nor illustration stands alone in the sermon. We use them to accomplish greater purposes.

Christian leadership is often misunderstood in a similar way. It is not a stand-alone quality or characteristic in a pastor’s life and ministry; it doesn’t exist in a vacuum. Rather, it always involves a destination—we don’t just lead, we lead *somewhere*. For Paul, that *somewhere* is godliness. He tells Timothy to “train [himself] for godliness” (1 Tim. 4:7), which, contrary to mere bodily exercise, “holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come” (1 Tim. 4:8). He assures the young pastor that such a pursuit is worth hard work and even suffering “because we have our hope set on the living God” (1 Tim. 4:10).

Overall, godliness is synonymous with being re-created into the *imago Dei*, the image of God in which humanity was originally made (Gen. 1:26–27). It’s the godlikeness that was perverted, distorted, and aborted because of our sin but is now being restored in us through Christ’s work. Thus, Paul tells Timothy to pursue this godliness for himself and his people because Jesus “is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe” (1 Tim. 4:10). Godliness is made possible only through the gospel (Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24).

This journey toward godliness begins at justification when our sins are forgiven, we’re made right with God (Rom. 5:1), and his life is restored in us through the death and resurrection of Christ



(Rom. 5:8–10). The journey continues in the lifelong process of sanctification as we're made to look more and more like God through the work of Christ's Spirit in us (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16). One day, this process will be completed in glorification when we finally and fully look like Christ at his return (1 John 3:1–3). The effectiveness of a pastor's leadership ability, then, must be measured by whether he's gradually moving himself and his people toward this destination. It doesn't matter what leadership abilities he possesses, the size of the church he pastors, or the breadth of his ministry platform. If he's not shepherding himself and his people to look more like Jesus, then he's not leading well when it comes to gospel ministry.

Practically speaking, this pursuit of godliness for ourselves and our people leads us to another intersection in these verses between pastoral leadership and preaching. When Paul warns the young pastor to “have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths” (1 Tim. 4:7), he does it right on the heels of noting “the words of the faith and of the good doctrine” that Timothy has followed and is responsible for teaching to his congregation (1 Tim. 4:6). Like Christians today, believers in Timothy's church were being assaulted with perversions of God's truth. Old Testament history was being contaminated with concocted legends, and genealogies were being stripped of their literal value and interpreted symbolically. All of this was syncretized with demonic asceticism that promised spiritual elitism through sexual abstinence and dietary restrictions.<sup>4</sup>

So, Paul compels Timothy to contend for the faith by countering such heresy with the proclamation of sound doctrine. Like Jude, the apostle probably would have preferred to write to his mentee and talk about the grandeur of the believer's salvation. But the onslaught of false doctrine was making it necessary to convince the young pastor “to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Such is the charge of every pastor. God's truth is the only real counter to the enemy's lies. The practice of explaining that nourishing truth stands in

4 R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 106–7.

stark contrast to feeding people the empty calories of fables, myths, old wives' tales, and the wisdom of the world, all of which are completely devoid of God and, therefore, contain no power to foster godlikeness in anyone's life (Col. 2:22–23).

God has ordained his truth to be the primary agent of growing believers in godliness (1 Pet. 2:2). Jesus prayed to his Father, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). As pastors, we can lead our people to a lot of things. Godliness must be at the top of the list, both for ourselves and our congregations. In all our leading, scriptural leadership requires us to lead them to this destination through the faithful exposition of God's truth, the only thing that can transform them into his image.

### **The Pastor's Communication Is Compelling**

Like many seminaries, our school's preaching curriculum contains a practical exercise where students preach to the class and then receive feedback from their peers and professor. Semester after semester, the same struggles surface for many young preachers. One of the most frequent weaknesses is the failure to preach with authority. "Convince me that what you're saying is important," we find ourselves repeating. "Preach like you believe what you're saying!"

The failure to speak authoritatively in preaching probably comes from several places. One is simply the nervousness that naturally results from inexperience (not to mention preaching in front of your peers and your professor!). Another influence is the fear of coming across as authoritarian or arrogant. A third stimulus is probably the trend in contemporary preaching toward being more conversational and less confrontational. Regardless of where it originates, passive preaching that is less than compelling and lacks authority is all too common in the contemporary church.

The apostle Paul would have none of that from his youthful disciple. "Command and teach these things," he instructed Timothy (1 Tim. 4:11). These words highlight the preaching ministry as the theme of the rest of this paragraph. As a basis for expositional

leadership, they also serve as an obvious intersection between Timothy's leadership, preaching, and pastoral ministry. The word "command" means to prescribe, to order, or to mandate with authority. The word "teach" carries the idea of instructing people. Together, they're Paul's way of directing Timothy to educate his congregants in the truth and exhort them to obey it. Overall, this combination is frequent in the pastoral epistles (e.g., 1 Tim. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 2:15). Paul wants Timothy to preach in such a way that his listeners sense the weightiness of his words and at the same time feel equipped to obey them. Paul wanted him to communicate God's truth in a compelling way.

Following the charge to command and compel his people probably didn't come easy for this young pastor. Like pastors in today's church, Timothy had a lot working against him. He was facing cultural pressure as Rome began to crumble and Emperor Nero turned up the heat on Christ followers. In fact, Timothy was about to lose his mentor, the voice of the Christian movement, who had a target on his back and was facing inevitable execution at the hands of the Roman government. Timothy was inexperienced, so some of the people in his church had a problem following his leadership (1 Tim. 4:12). He also was a little sickly at times, leading Paul to prescribe medicine for him (1 Tim. 5:23). On top of all these things, a survey of Paul's epistles shows that Timothy was a naturally timid person (e.g., 2 Tim. 1:7–8; 1 Cor. 16:10–11). Skills like working a room and taking charge didn't come easily for him. All these things surely played a role in tempting Timothy to be a little reserved in his preaching.

Most of us pastors can identify with at least a few of the things Timothy was facing. We feel the pushback against our ministry and message from our increasingly secular culture. We know the sense of loneliness and anxiety that comes when mentors are no longer around. We can be intimidated by our lack of experience in ministry leadership or unfamiliarity with a new ministry assignment. Some of us navigate debilitating health problems, either in our own lives or the lives of family members. And many pastors know what it means to be naturally

timid or lacking in gifts that seem most conducive for public speaking and other aspects of pastoral leadership. All these realities and more can undermine a pastor's confidence when he rises to preach, causing him to throttle back a bit in his communication and speak with less authority.

So, what is a pastor to do when he is reserved in his public proclamation for personal or circumstantial reasons? The object in Paul's instructions holds the key: "Command and teach these things" (1 Tim. 4:11). We noted earlier that the apostle frequently uses the phrase "these things" in this letter to encapsulate the practical and doctrinal issues that he's calling Timothy to address in his pastoral leadership. However, it's important that, on this side of a closed canon, we understand "these things" to represent more than instructions limited to the cultural and doctrinal subjects he addressed.

Paul's use of "these things" represents for us the whole of apostolic teaching and even the totality of biblical revelation. The apostle Peter will later even verify that Paul's writings are to be viewed on the same level as the rest of inspired Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15–16). And in his next letter to Timothy, Paul will say, "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Everything God commanded Timothy to be and do through the proclamation and pen of the apostle Paul was to be commanded to Timothy's audience who would then command others. And so, this stewardship has continued throughout Christian history, even until now.

This is where the pastor's authority lies. This is why we can command and compel in our preaching. Today, we preach under the authority of apostolic instruction, and our content comes from the record of God's supernatural revelation that we know to be inerrant, infallible, and sufficient to accomplish God's redemptive purposes in people's lives. Our message is not our own. Overall, the Bible uses several different images to describe the derived authority that characterizes preaching. We're called stewards because we are entrusted with someone else's possession. We're called sowers because we scatter someone else's seed.

We're called heralds because we carry someone else's message. We're called ambassadors because we represent someone else! We preach under an authority that isn't our own, and we communicate a message that didn't originate with us.

Not only do we stand in a long heritage of apostolic authority but we also stand in a long line of faithful expositors. Our delegated authority and entrusted message mean that we must accurately represent the one who commissioned us. What we say must rightly reflect the nature and the message of the Lord we represent. Exposition is not a sermon form, it's a process. It's the process of interpreting "these things" that God has spoken and then explaining them to contemporary listeners so they can hear his voice and be transformed into his image.

### **The Pastor's Esteem Is Earned**

"Preach the Gospel at all times, and if necessary use words." This familiar saying is most frequently credited to Francis of Assisi, but its true origin is unknown. Whoever said it obviously felt like the most important aspect of our gospel witness is the way we live our lives. But in reality, that assertion is quite misleading. You can live a moral life with impeccable integrity and yet people can still die and go to hell wondering what made the difference in your life. Unless people hear the gospel message and embrace it, they can't be saved (Rom. 10:14; Col. 4:5-6; 1 Pet. 3:15).

The shortsightedness of this saying, however, does not negate the reality that there is a relationship between what we say and how we act. This is certainly true in pastoral preaching. The apostle Paul knows that young Timothy, probably in his early- to mid-thirties at the time, is experiencing some pushback against his pastoral leadership. Some of the people don't esteem him very highly because of his age. Such a response is understandable when a young guy is standing up in front of a crowd commanding and teaching (1 Tim. 4:11) people who are older than him. So Paul encourages him, "Let no one despise you for your youth" (1 Tim. 4:12). When Timothy stands up to preach, Paul

doesn't want his people to look down on him and dismiss his teaching simply because he's young.

Some things are objective in the world. A person's age and level of experience are among them. So what is Timothy supposed to do? He can't walk into the room one day and announce to his congregation that he's now identifying as a fifty-year-old. And, certainly, it isn't an acceptable option for him to stop preaching. The aged apostle has an answer. "Set the believers an example," Paul tells the youthful preacher, "in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). Instead of Timothy's preaching being undermined by his age, Paul says, it can be enhanced by his example. In other words, he can earn the people's esteem by his actions.

It is here that we see the intersection between leadership, preaching, and pastoral ministry. A pastor can dispel a lot of criticism about his leadership (including his preaching) by supporting his authority in the pulpit with a life well lived outside the pulpit. This includes the whole spectrum of life. According to Paul, it means our "speech" should be wholesome, edifying, honest, tasteful, guarded, wise, and humble. It means that when we are at the ballpark or grocery store our "conduct" should be righteous and above reproach. It means our entire lives should be lived "in love, in faith, in purity," just like the life of Jesus who lives within us.

The congruence between our online leadership in the pulpit and our offline leadership as a godly example also guards against us abusing our authority over the people we shepherd. Peter says that pastors are "not [to be] domineering over those in [their] charge, but . . . examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:3). Paul instructs Timothy to lead and instruct his church members as family (1 Tim. 4:6; 5:1–2). We don't boss family around, belittle them like they're no-good losers, or bully them into acting properly (as is often associated with some pastoral preaching). Rather, Paul says we're to set an example for our people by the way we live, which implies a desire for them to emulate us (1 Cor. 11:1). We want our church members to honor Christ in their lives, so we give them examples to follow like parents do for

their children. If we approach pastoral ministry with this perspective, we'll be able to give strong leadership to our people both inside and outside the pulpit.

Whether your inexperience is due to your age or having a fresh start in a new ministry field, people won't be able to look down on you if they have to look up to your actions. They won't reject you for your inexperience if they respect you for your integrity; they won't hate on you for your inexperience if they hold you up in high esteem. On the other hand, we can't expect people to respect us simply because we hold the office of pastor or engage in the ministry of preaching. Thus, as part of our scriptural leadership, we must earn their esteem by the way we live and lead in every area of life and ministry.

### **The Pastor's Priority Is Preaching**

While preaching isn't the only way a pastor leads, it ought to be the first way he leads, at least as far as his public ministry goes. Preaching is just about the only ministry in which a pastor engages every single week (sometimes multiple times) and just about the only ministry he exercises when all his people are expected to be present. It's the time when he gets to speak to the greatest number of people, and it comes around regularly like clockwork. The pastor of a local church does a lot of things—personal evangelism and disciple making, vision and strategy development, meetings, counseling, visitation, weddings, funerals, and more—but his top priority is the ministry through which he addresses the greatest number of people on the most frequent basis.

The apostle Paul wants Timothy to have his priorities right. So, he tells him to “devote [himself] to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching” (1 Tim. 4:13). About this directive, R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell assert, “This simple sentence is a landmark text in defining the major work of the pastor and the worship of the church.”<sup>5</sup> The verb “devote” means to give oneself to something. This

5 Hughes and Chapell, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 115.

work is to be Timothy's priority. Furthermore, the word "implies previous preparation in private."<sup>6</sup> Timothy is not just to give himself to the public work, but to the study and preparation it takes to get ready to do it—"it [is] to be his way of life."<sup>7</sup>

According to Paul, this primary work to which Timothy, and every pastor, is called to devote his life includes three essential aspects—reading, exhortation, and teaching. First, "the public reading of Scripture" involves reading it aloud in the public worship service. Second, "exhortation," sometimes translated as "preaching," is pressing the truth of the passage on the people's consciences by way of challenge, rebuke, persuasion, plea, counsel, and comfort. This is equivalent to application but not limited to practical ways to act on the truth. It involves sincerely appealing to people's wills to obey, identifying the blessings when they do, and warning them of the consequences when they don't. Third, "teaching" is explaining the meaning of the text. While exhortation appeals to the will, teaching appeals to the intellect and provides the necessary information for hearers to understand the truth and respond rightly.

Needless to say, that's a pretty good description of biblical exposition! Paul says the young pastor is to read Scripture aloud, help people understand it, and compel them to obey it. To say it another way: read it, explain it, apply it. In some respect, these three elements are the irreducible minimums and nonnegotiables that qualify preaching as expository. John Stott says,

It was already customary in the synagogue for the reading of Scripture to be followed by an exposition, and this practice was carried over into the Christian assemblies, being the origin of the sermon in public worship. It was taken for granted from the beginning that Christian preaching would be expository preaching, that is, that all

6 Donald Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14 of *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 111.

7 John F. MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 175–76.



Christian instruction and exhortation would be drawn out of the passage which had been read.<sup>8</sup>

We call this work “exposition” because it involves the process of peeling back the layers of time, culture, language, context, and other elements that characterize biblical revelation for the purpose of *exposing* God’s voice to people.

The union between pastoral leadership and biblical exposition is clear. Preaching is obviously not the only way a pastor leads, but it is arguably the most important. While a pastor provides leadership in all the ministries mentioned earlier, none are more effectual than the regular times he opens the Scriptures and leads God’s people to hear his voice, understand what he’s saying, and say yes to it. We’ve already seen the importance of the pastor leading by example, something that can make or break his effectiveness as a preacher. But the pastor’s example, like other mediums of leadership, gets limited airtime in comparison to his work as a preacher. Preaching provides the best venue for leading and exercising influence on the flock that’s been entrusted to his care. Thus, scriptural leadership requires preaching to be our priority.

### **The Pastor’s Calling Is Critical**

Ordination is somewhat of a convoluted concept in today’s church. Most Christians see it as the process of setting an individual apart from the laity as clergy and authorizing them to perform various religious duties. Some denominations require it, but others don’t. Some ministers have been formally ordained, while others haven’t. Some people believe it’s a biblical concept, and others believe Scripture is silent on the subject. Tragically, even many denominations, churches, and individuals who do embrace it do so as a mere formality. Often it’s approached as a mere rubber stamp for being able to perform wedding ceremonies or opting out of social security with the IRS.

8 Stott, *Guard the Truth*, 121–22.

Regardless of what we call it, or even whether we embrace it as a formal practice, the apostle Paul implied that the local church is to engage in some method of setting individuals apart for Christian leadership. He told Timothy, “Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you” (1 Tim. 4:14). He would later appeal to it again, saying, “I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands” (2 Tim. 1:6). Obviously, for Paul, this process wasn’t merely a formality, licensure, or tax benefit. Whatever it entails, it appears to play a weighty (even supernatural!) role in the call of God on Timothy’s life. And Timothy must be faithful to it.

What is Paul talking about? While we don’t have all the historical information we would like to have about this process, it appears that three parts—gift, prophecy, and laying on of hands—comprised Timothy’s calling from God. “Prophecy” was how the Holy Spirit called him (1 Tim. 1:18), in much the same way the Spirit “called” Paul and Barnabas in Antioch (Acts 13:1–3). The “council of elders” laying their hands on him was the church’s recognition, acknowledgment, and confirmation of that calling. Both elements underscore the crucial and spiritual role local churches play in the calling of men to gospel ministry. Sometimes an individual senses God’s call first and then the church confirms it. Other times the church recognizes the call first and then encourages the individual to respond to it. Overall, God’s call to gospel ministry rarely comes in isolation—most often it occurs as a beautiful partnership between Christ’s Spirit and his body.

But what exactly is this “gift” that Timothy has been given? Opinions regarding its exact nature are all over the map. It’s been identified as the spiritual ability to build up the church, rule the church, and discern between what’s true and what’s false.<sup>9</sup> But the common denominator in many perspectives is that it had something to do with Timothy’s preaching,<sup>10</sup> a ministry that certainly encompassed all these other

9 Stott, *Guard the Truth*, 122.

10 See Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 108; Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus* (Nashville: B&H, 1992), 139; Stott, *Guard the Truth*, 122; Hughes and Chapell, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 117; MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 179.

leadership tasks. This conclusion is supported by the immediate context of our passage, 1 Timothy 4:6–16, as well as the frequent exhortations Paul gives Timothy in his second letter to minister God’s word faithfully (2 Tim. 2:15, 24–26; 3:14–4:5).

The core of Paul’s exhortation, however, isn’t just a repeated appeal for Timothy to exercise his gift of preaching. The imperative “Do not neglect” in the language of the New Testament suggests that Timothy probably has been showing some signs of avoiding (if not abandoning) his call to preach and that he should stop doing so immediately. Later Paul will tell him to “fan into flame [this] gift of God” (2 Tim. 1:6), implying that his endowment is not automatic or even permanent if left unattended. Hughes and Chapell identify this call and giftedness to preach as a “use it or lose it” enterprise.<sup>11</sup> If the man of God abandons or even neglects his preaching gift for ungodly reasons, he stands in danger of losing it and becoming a statistic in the large number of men who leave the ministry every year. The stakes are high and the time is short. Pastors must rise to the occasion and steward their ministry callings. This call is critical in gospel advancement and the church’s fulfillment of Christ’s mission.

Once again, like the instructions about reading, exhorting, and teaching in the previous verse, the connection between pastoral leadership and preaching in the current exhortation is inherent. Pastors have been given the supernatural “gift” to lead the church, and our leadership is inextricably tied to our calling to preach. Therefore, we must embrace and nurture that calling. We lead in a variety of ways—edifying the church, overseeing the church, discerning between true and false doctrine, and much more. But all these areas of leadership are either carried out or supported by our ministry in the pulpit. We are called to faithfully expound God’s word so that individual believers are shaped into Christ’s image and our congregations follow us as undershepherds while we lead them to corporate Christlikeness.

11 Hughes and Chapell, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 117.

## The Pastor's Life Is Leveraged

“God first. Family second. Church third.” This set of priorities—and its order—has been declared by a lot of pastoral candidates to a lot of search committees. The combination and sequence sounds very spiritual, especially when it is expressed as a pastor’s desire to not let the busyness of church ministry adversely affect his family. But is it biblical? Does a man’s family rank higher on a pastor’s priority list than the body of Christ? The gospel? The Great Commission? Jesus said, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26; Matt. 10:37). It sounds like our Lord might not have that same list of priorities.

To be sure, Jesus does not want the pastor’s ministry to cause him to lose or neglect his family. But neither does he want the pastor’s family or anything else to keep him from spending himself on his ministry calling. Paul compels Timothy to “practice these things, immerse yourself in them” (1 Tim. 4:15). The term “practice” carries the idea of thinking about, meditating on, or planning for. The word “immerse” literally means to “be in.” Together, these two imperatives suggest that a preacher of the gospel is to be absorbed with his preaching ministry in both thought and action, both preparation and practice. Doing so does not necessitate neglecting his family. While it may require wisdom and balance, Jesus never calls us to anything for which his grace isn’t sufficient. And two things can both be true at the same time without compromising either. The pastor can be a faithful husband and father while simultaneously obeying his call to leverage his life for the proclamation of the gospel.

The core components of leadership, preaching, and pastoral ministry are woven into Paul’s reason for encouraging Timothy to spend himself on his preaching “so that all may see [his] progress” (1 Tim. 4:15). Later Paul will use the verbal form of the word “progress” to describe people regressing in ungodliness (2 Tim. 2:16; 3:9). But here he’s using the term to describe Timothy’s “development in the

teachings of godliness that accord with the gospel.”<sup>12</sup> Stott describes this dynamic well:

People should be able to observe not only what [Christian leaders] are but what they are becoming, supplying evidence that they are growing into maturity in Christ. Some Christian leaders imagine that they have to appear perfect, with no visible flaws or blemishes. But there are at least two reasons why this is a mistake. First, it is hypocritical. Since none of us is a paragon of all virtues, it is dishonest to pretend to be. Secondly, the pretense [sic] discourages people, who then suppose that their leaders are altogether exceptional and even inhuman.<sup>13</sup>

At no time in our ministries as pastors do people observe our growth in godliness more than as they listen to us preach week by week. They see and hear our authenticity, humanity, and progress. They see and hear us continue to grow and learn. They see and hear us leverage everything to preach the word. As a result, they are encouraged, inspired, and equipped to follow our lead to the destination of looking more like Jesus. After all, Jesus leveraged his entire life so that could be a reality.

### **The Pastor’s Integrity Is Indispensable**

It’s been refreshing to see a heightened emphasis on integrity in recent years. There seems to be a kind of revival of it in many sectors of life, including politics, entertainment, and business. According to Jeff Iorg, “a person of integrity is a whole, complete, undivided person—not segmented or fractionalized. No double-dealing, no double standards, and no double meanings! A person is whole, complete, undivided in words and actions and standards.”<sup>14</sup> To have integrity implies a consistency between what’s on the inside of a person and what’s on the outside.

12 Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 140.

13 Stott, *Guard the Truth*, 123–24.

14 Jeff Iorg, *The Character of Leadership* (Nashville: B&H, 2007), 24.

In no sector of life is integrity more indispensable than in gospel ministry. For ten verses now the great apostle has been shepherding his young protégé in the relationship between his leadership, pastoral responsibilities, and public preaching ministry. Now, in somewhat of a summary statement of everything that has preceded it, the intersection between these dimensions once again is low-hanging fruit. In this exhortation, Paul speaks directly about leadership both in and out of the pulpit: “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching” (1 Tim. 4:16). This imperative compels Timothy to give careful attention (“keep a close watch”) to his character and conduct (“on yourself”) as well as the doctrine that he teaches (“on the teaching”).

While Paul certainly wants integrity to be characteristic of both pastoral leadership and preaching as individual dimensions of the pastor’s ministry, he seems more concerned here that they demonstrate integrity in both of these at the same time. In other words, he charges us to make sure there’s consistency between our personal lives and our preaching ministries. Our absorption with preaching (1 Tim. 4:15) can’t be allowed to make us abandon the care of our souls. Likewise, our personal soul care can never be allowed to make us neglect our preaching ministry to our congregations. There must be a consistency between the time and attention we give to these components because collectively they will determine our effectiveness as pastors.

Integrity between our public ministry and our private lives is vital because, according to Paul, the stakes are high. He says to “persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim. 4:16). Our endurance in maintaining such a balance is essential for eternal salvation, both for ourselves as well as our people. Our persistence doesn’t earn this salvation, but it does give public testimony to its reality. Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin explain,

It is not that Timothy’s endurance would merit salvation but that a stamina that produced holiness and doctrinal orthodoxy gave incontrovertible evidence of heading for salvation. Second, Paul suggested that the obedient perseverance of the preacher is an important factor

in the endurance of the hearers. The preacher's model of perseverance builds the same trait in his flock. The stumbles and fumbles of a wandering spiritual leader will infect a congregation with a variety of spiritual sicknesses.<sup>15</sup>

The combination and consistency between godliness in our lives and godliness expounded from our pulpits is both an agent and evidence of salvation. God graciously uses this potent gospel formula to compel our listeners to respond to the faithful exposition of his word. This is why our integrity is indispensable for scriptural leadership.

### Conclusion

In our contemporary Christian culture, pastors are constantly bombarded with leadership materials and messages, many of which are hard to distinguish from secular business philosophies. Sadly, many ministry leaders have embraced these worldly principles and combined them with trendy approaches in their efforts to stay relevant in a very fluid culture. Even though these pastors are often celebrated, their leadership is typically compromised by diluted messages that fail to honor the biblical text because it doesn't serve their attempts at social influence and cultural relevance.

Ironically, expository preaching is hailed as the antidote, but it too suffers from similar inconsistencies. Oftentimes its proponents define it broadly and endorse it ceremoniously without a clear understanding of its nature or practice. Sadly, this can result in people dismissing Scripture as irrelevant and disregarding preaching as religious rants. When the distorted solution only serves to compound leadership issues in the modern church, God's people find themselves "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36).

Against these various and influential "winds of doctrine," what is the secret of shepherding God's people well? The beginning point, at least, is being gripped by a theology of preaching and pastoral

<sup>15</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 141.

leadership that flows from the pages of God's holy word. Stott argues for this essential ordering, challenging pastors to allow their doctrinal commitments to determine their practical approach: "The essential secret is not mastering certain techniques but being mastered by certain convictions."<sup>16</sup> This insightful exhortation about maintaining our motivation to preach in a world that doesn't want to listen reminds us that our theology must determine our methodology.

Overall, this crucial order must be maintained for leading through exposition, two tasks that many pastors don't even see as belonging in the same sentence but that actually are wedded together by the biblical truths that undergird them both. And while Paul's words in 1 Timothy 4 don't serve as an exhaustive biblical foundation for such a work, they do provide a solid starting place for seeing how God intends biblical exposition and pastoral leadership to work in tandem as scriptural leadership.

16 Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 92.