

1 Timothy 4:11-16 How to Train for Godliness

¹¹ Command and teach these things. ¹² Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. ¹³ Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. ¹⁴ Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you. ¹⁵ Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. ¹⁶ Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Notes:

- v.11 - again "these things" at least refers to the focus on sound teaching and refuting false teaching. But throughout, and especially here integrity is central to being able to do this well. One must be nourished in the truth and avoid error in order to help others do the same.
- v.13 - here is one of several verses in the Pastoral epistles that make it clear preaching and teaching is an essential work of Christian ministry and of pastors.
- v. 14 - the "gift" Timothy received should be understood consistently with the rest of the New Testament teaching on gifts and the Holy Spirit. Thus, Timothy's gift is both the office to function as a pastor at Ephesus and the Spirit's empowerment to do this task.
- v.16 - it may sound strange to say by doing all this people will be saved. Of course Paul is not denying the sufficiency of Christ's work, but rather that a godliness lived with integrity in word and deed over the long haul play a critical role in showing the gospel really does work. Personal integrity and spiritual vitality are key to effective ministry for one's own faith and for others.

Questions

1. It is worth asking again, what do you take away from Paul's repeated stress on "command and teach these things" that are non-negotiable aspects of Christian ministry?
2. Compare verse 3:6 and 4:12. How do we discern good character in young Christian leaders? What clues do these verses give? How do you know when it is too soon to give someone young in the faith responsibility and when do they need to be encouraged to stretch themselves?
3. (See note above) In light of verse 14, how does the body of Christ aid in helping us know and nourish our gifts and responsibilities?
4. What does it look like to watch your life and doctrine closely? Why is that important not only for your own faith, but for anyone observing your progress in faith in the Lord Jesus?