

“Maturing Minister” (1 Tim. 4:12-16)

1. The Minister’s Modeling (12)

- a. Maturity is seldom found in youth today. In Timothy’s day, youth in the Greek culture included those under 40; and for the Jews, under 30. Hence “elders” were the typical leaders. Many ministers today begin before the age of 30 but it doesn’t mean they are immature. They must, however, model godliness so as to be respected.
- b. Since Timothy was to “command” (cf. v. 11; 1:3), it was vital that he be “blameless” (3:2) so that those who may seek to discredit him have no legitimate charge and that all could acknowledge his progress (4:15).
- c. He was to model so as to be imitated (cf. 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17). “Paul assumed this role in relation to Timothy (1 Cor 4:17) and within the churches (1 Thess 1:7; 2 Thess 3:9; Phil 3:17); and in these letters to delegates, Timothy and Titus were to do the same (Titus 2:7). Elsewhere it was a responsibility to be taken up by believers in general (e.g. 1 Thess 1:7), and expected of church leaders (1 Pet 5:3). To be a model or set an example meant more than simply presenting a pattern that others were to mimic: “The more a life is moulded by the word, the more it becomes *typos*, a model or mould.”¹² It was a case of living out life as faith in the gospel had shaped it (sic).¹
- d. Paul included a list of categories which would be molded by living in the Gospel.
 - i. In Word: Let your yes be yes and no be no. Some ministers try to avoid persecution or even questioning by being purposefully vague. Our word must be clear, unapologetic, and bold. Think about it: where do you think we are headed as a nation? If you say anything negative about homosexuality, gender dysphoria, abortion, or anything politically incorrect it is considered hate speech and violent. If we are faithful to the Scriptures, we will be guilty of said “hate speech” and “violence.” Ministers have toned down such bold exhortations either by ignoring them or twisting passages to wink at such sins so as to be noncontroversial.
 - ii. In Conduct: Integrity is when one’s conduct matches his word. If you are to be a person of your word – your actions reveal such. We’ll conclude with v. 16 which drives the point.
 - iii. In Love: Not kindness without truth or discipline, but cruel to be kind! Love does not rejoice in iniquity, thus it speaks and acts against sin and its perversions, manipulations, and other deceptions. A minister w/o a spine will ultimately hinder rather than advance the Kingdom. Love is sacrificial – not sacrificing making a stand because you don’t want to be unkind by pointing out someone’s sin; but sacrificing being liked or friended (not FB) in order to bear the burden of truth and salvation!
 - iv. In Faith: usually linked with love indicating the faithfulness of love not unlike ‘in spirit’ which was included in later manuscripts. 1 Cor. 4:2.
 - v. In Purity: likely connoting sexual purity as it is a snare and can and has destroyed ministries. See also 1 Tim. 3:2 “one woman man” and 2 Tim. 2:22 “flee from youthful lusts.” In modeling such godliness, Timothy would keep a balance of humility, wisdom, and authority. He could clearly command obedience to the Word as he modeled such, yet he needed not “rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father [and] younger men as brothers” (5:1).

2. The Minister’s Mode (13)

¹² Goppelt, *TDNT* 8:250.

¹ Towner, P. H. (2006). *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (pp. 314–315). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

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- a. Pattern of Reading: Following the pattern of old. It should be no surprise that the Minister of the Word must prioritize the dissemination of it. “Part of every worship service in a synagogue was the reading and explanation of the Old Testament Scriptures (cf. Luke 4:16ff.; Acts 15:21). That custom dates back to the practice of the exiles who returned from the Babylonian captivity (cf. Neh. 8:1–8). To the reading of the Old Testament, the early church added the reading and explanation of the apostles’ doctrine (cf. Acts 2:42; Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27). As New Testament letters were written and circulated during the early years, they took their place in the public reading.”² See **Further Study** on Public Reading
 - b. Pattern of Exhorting: Along with the reading of the Scripture came the exhortation to “godliness.”
 - c. Pattern of Teaching: And in order to rightly apply it one must rightly divide it by teaching the accurate doctrines within. This is why Tim was not to “neglect” his gift and to continually “meditate” and learn in order to instruct and model. →
3. The Minister’s Marking (14)
- a. The minister must recall his calling, giftedness, and recognition of the church in order to keep encouraged. “The laying of hands on Saul and Barnabas at the commencement of their missionary labours (Acts 13:1–3) furnishes the background for the present statement, since it was also connected with prophecy and the Spirit. Timothy is reminded of the occasion when he was set aside for ministry and is urged to take courage from it (see also 2 Tim. 1:6) (sic).”³
 - b. “Oracular utterances had long been used to attest the divine rights of kings and other officials, and Paul’s mentioning of prophecies about Timothy’s gift (probably teaching— 4:13) at his ordination could help quiet the opposition (see comment on 1:18). The approval of the “presbytery” (KJV, NASB) or “body of elders” (NIV) also could silence criticisms about his youth (4:12). Mature Jewish teachers ordained other Jewish teachers through laying hands on them; this practice served as official accreditation.”⁴
 - c. This pastoral instruction is not without guidance and application for the church. This verse also reminds the elders who affirmed Timothy and we are not to forget 1 Cor. 16:10-11 where Paul himself affirms a young Timothy.
 - d. I am grateful for God’s providence putting me here, and I’m grateful to this church taking me on as a 40 yr. old youth. I had a grounded faith and understanding of Scripture and was striving for godliness and meditating on the Word. I’ve matured in holiness, learning, preaching, and overall experience. My convictions are strong and firmly grounded in the Word. I have much further to go and grow, but I’ve been able to do such with your grace and God’s patience.
 - e. Having said that, there is no room for complacency as we ministers of the Word must bear a continued mark of absorbing the Word. →
4. The Minister’s Meditation (15)

² MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 176). Moody Press.

³ Guthrie, D. (1994). *1 Timothy*. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 1301). Inter-Varsity Press.

KJV King James Version

NASB New American Standard Bible

NIV New International Version

⁴ Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament* (1 Ti 4:14). InterVarsity Press.

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- a. “‘These things’ (*tauta*) is an expression which occurs eight times in this letter;²⁸ it sums up the instructions and orders which Paul had given Timothy.”⁵
 - b. “Give yourself entirely” to the meditation of such as it is a lifestyle of ministry from which there is no vacation.
 - c. Ministers may have a reprieve or even sabbatical from the demands of ministry but not of godliness. We are to absorb the instructions of ‘these things’ and see that our lives are a ministry as the evil one never takes a break from the warfare. It is helpful (if not necessary) to remind ourselves that we are soldiers under command in a warfare in which the enemies seek to render us useless – or even condemned!
 - d. Our resolve to live for Christ and do all things for His glory (cf. Col. 3:23) and take even our thoughts captive to Him (2 Cor. 10:5) will show us approved in the sight of all making it “evident to all.”
5. The Minister’s Matching (16)
- a. In this summarizing verse, Paul reiterates the necessity of integrity which ‘evidentially’ marks the consistency of our lives and doctrine. What one truly believes determines how she lives. If one displays no godliness, he reveals that he doesn’t really trust the LORD, His Word, or His promises.
 - b. But when one does live out (in faith) what he professes to believe, he participates actively in his sanctification, which is an indispensable aspect of salvation.
 - c. This, in turn, contributes to the faith and salvation of others.
 - d. One with merely a professed faith and no faithfulness betrays Christ, himself, and those for whom he is called to “save.”
 - e. “It is the unmistakable teaching of Scripture that persevering in the faith is a mark of genuine salvation. Jesus said in John 8:31, “If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine” (cf. Matt. 10:22; 24:13; Acts 13:43; 14:22; Rom. 2:7; Col. 1:23; Heb. 3:14).”⁶
 - f. Read v. 16 again. Does your walk match your talk?

PC:

The maturing minister of the Word is one who models godliness and the precedent of disseminating the Scriptures. He is one who is marked by the affirmation of the Spirit, the Church, and his ability to teach. And because he absorbs the Word continually, his life and speech match his professed faith. We ministers need affirmation (not flattery); and the Word which holds us to the standard is the Word which affirms our calling and faith. We must all be watchful, on guard, as everything in the world seeks to drive a wedge between us and the Word and render us useless or even condemned. Each minister of the Word (and believer in general) must “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine, Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Tim. 4:16).

²⁸ 1 Tim. 3:14; 4:6, 11, 15; 5:7, 21; 6:2, 17.

⁵ Stott, J. R. W. (1996). *Guard the truth: the message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (p. 118). InterVarsity Press.

⁶ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 181). Moody Press.

Further Study:

Public Reading:

As in the synagogue service (both in Palestine and in the Diaspora), public reading of Scripture was central to the service; the reading from the Law was probably generally accompanied by one from the Prophets. The reading was then expounded (exhortation and teaching) by means of a homily on the text that had been read. (This Jewish practice [cf. Neh 8:8] would be intelligible in a Greco-Roman context; in Greco-Roman schools, children translated texts from classical Greek into vernacular Greek, then expounded them in response to questions and answers.) By the mid-second century apostolic writings (later officially recognized as the New Testament) were being read alongside the Old Testament in church services. “Until I come” authorizes Timothy: his exposition of Scripture would function as the equivalent of Paul’s apostolic presence.⁷

The first of these activities is correctly translated “the public reading of Scripture” (TNIV, NRSV).²² This refers to the practice, inherited from temple and synagogue worship, of the public reading of the OT (Neh 8:7–8; Deut 31:11–12; 1QS 6:6–8),²³ and while the emphasis here is on the regular performance of the activity, underlying the instruction are certain assumptions about Timothy’s ability to read well.²⁴ It is not certain whether the Jewish schedule of readings, which included selections from Torah and the prophets according to a 3-year cycle (cf. Acts 13:15; 2 Cor 3:14),²⁵ was followed. But it is likely that the OT (with some fluidity of content in this period), in Greek translation (in Paul’s churches), would have been the main focus of this public reading. The synagogue readings would have expanded naturally to include the stories in the Gospel tradition and the Pauline letters, as texts such as 2 Cor 7:8; Col 4:16; 1 Thess 5:27 and 2 Thess 3:14 suggest for the latter.

It is normally assumed, apparently, that the primary function of the public reading of Scripture in the worship setting was to lay the groundwork for the preaching and teaching to follow (corresponding to Scripture reading practices in many non-liturgical traditions today).²⁶ This is a partial explanation, and indeed in Jewish worship the public reading was followed by preaching/teaching. Yet the public reading of the Scriptures served another deeper social function as well. Modern studies of narrative and human

⁷ Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament* (1 Ti 4:13). InterVarsity Press.

TNIV Today’s New International Version

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

²² Gk. ἀνάγνωσις (2 Cor 3:14; Acts 13:15); Spicq, *TLNT* 1:101–102; R. Bultmann, *TDNT* 1:343–44.

1QS Rule of the Community

²³ Towner, “The Public Reading of Scripture.” Cf. Mounce, 200, while acknowledging that a public reading is envisioned with synagogue practices in the background, nevertheless sees the focus in “reading” to be on Timothy himself: “Timothy is to immerse himself in the biblical text...”

²⁴ Certain discussions that speak of the difficulty of reading and the importance of the task begin a Greek background sketch. Epictetus wrote: “When you say, ‘Come listen to a reading that I am going to do,’ make sure that you do not grope your way through” (3.23.6; see also Plutarch, *Alex.* 1.1; 23.3). Apprenticeship to the scholar began in the school (Plato, *Laws* 810b), and if the pupil misread a syllable or stumbled in the reading, he often experienced extreme embarrassment (Plautus, *Bacch.* 423ff.). Training in reading became a fundamental element in the rhetorical education, because in the recitation-declamation component of the official examination, the student had to give critical comment on the text that was sight read (Plutarch, *De aud. Poet*). The point of such references is simply that reading was an act the success of which was measured by its accuracy in communicating the content of a written discourse exactly. Reverence for the biblical texts in the case of ancient Jewish culture assures the same level of concern within the Jewish context. Those called on to read in a Christian church, whether in Palestine or the Diaspora, would be expected to conform to high standards of quality control.

²⁵ See Towner, “The Public Reading of Scripture,” for discussion of reading patterns; Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 2:448.

²⁶ Cf. Marshall, 563; Collins, 129.

social experience and of the role of reading and readers within the broader discussion of hermeneutics and communication events work from very different bases and arrive at different assessments of the place of the reader/hearer in the determination of meaning.²⁷ But while almost all aspects of the related discussions continue to be under construction, a point of convergence that seems to have emerged, whether the individual reading event (N. Holland) or the corporate/public reading event (D. Bleich, S. Crites, D. H. Kelsey, S. Hauerwas) is considered, is that reading/hearing of certain significant texts influences the formation, shaping, defining and redefining of individual and corporate identity.²⁸ The significance of this observation for understanding the role of the public reading of Scripture in the Jewish and Christian tradition may be invaluable.²⁹

From the perspective of the historical description of the practice as noticed in the OT and NT records (as well as in other relevant literature in Judaism), it may be suggested that the Scriptures were intentionally read as a way of answering the always present and pertinent question: who are we? Related but subsidiary questions—if this is who we are, how should we live, what should we do, etc.—were equally ever-present and addressed as the didactic response to the regular public readings of the holy texts (in the form of Targumic expansion, “preaching and teaching”). Although the question of identity was always the given subtext, the need for a particularly relevant re-expression of the answer clearly became more acute whenever situations that threatened the community’s well-being presented themselves, whether internal in the form of idolatry or rebellion against God, or external in the form of attacks from the outside.⁸

²⁷ Cf. the different programs of N. Holland, *The Dynamics of Literary Response* (New York: OUP, 1968); id., *5 Readers Reading* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975); D. Bleich, *The Double Perspective: Language, Literacy and Social Relations* (New York: OUP, 1988); S. Crites, “The Narrative Quality of Experience,” *JAAR* 39 (1971), 291–311; D. H. Kelsey, “Biblical Narrative and Theological Anthropology,” in G. Green (ed.), *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 121–43; S. Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

²⁸ In addition to Crites, Kelsey and Hauerwas (just cited), see also L. T. Johnson, *Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church* (Rev. Ed.; Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 28–33.

²⁹ The practice and function of public reading in the Greek religious sphere, including both the more publicly relevant Delphic Oracles and the more private mystery cults, might be regarded as a useful backdrop to reading Scripture in Pauline churches. The institution of the Delphic Oracle, more relevant to the classical period, provided Greek society with a divine touchstone, embracing the religious, moral and political facets of Greek life. Its role in reinforcing the sense of corporate Greek identity (normally segmented into city-groups) in these terms, cannot be overestimated (see the discussion in E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 166–71). The broad religious category of the so-called “Mysteries” is potentially more relevant to the NT period, but as a category it does not represent a religious or cultural phenomenon that is particularly unified, stable or predictable, and so great care is needed in assessing the data that has come to light (see Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 197–240). Our knowledge of the liturgical practices of the ancient religious cults is fragmentary at best, and often ancient writers intentionally withheld from their descriptions the very details our reconstructions could most profit from (D. E. Aune, “Prolegomena to the Study of Oral Tradition in the Hellenistic World,” in H. Wansbrough [ed.], *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991], 59–106, 83–85; see refs. to the sources). Nevertheless, glimpses of practices in this setting provided by the ancient writers suggest that various readings and recitations (of materials at first perpetuated in an oral tradition but eventually written down and read) did play a part in the groups’ communal activities. Of greatest interest is the observation that a myth (e.g. surrounding Dionysius, Mithras; cf. the *Hymn to Demeter*) that would be “recited and enacted” (Pausanias, 8.6.5) lay at the center of a group’s identity. The central myth celebrated by a given cult was not a secret, whereas the initiation rites were indeed kept secret, and in addition to the central myth, the withholding of the initiatory revelation was paramount to a group’s distinctiveness and sense of identity (see Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 197–240).

⁸ Towner, P. H. (2006). *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (pp. 316–319). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.