



# Daily Bible Habit

## Pastoral Epistles

Thomas F. Fischer, M.Div., M.S.A.

### Focus Points.../ *Timothy 4*

#### Listen To...

Paul's remarkable ability and desire to uphold and encourage Timothy in his ministry.

#### Prayer:

Holy Spirit, I thank You for calling pastors and ministers to Your church. As I read I Timothy 4, help me to see just how important it is for me to encourage them by my prayers, my learning, my service and my response of faith. Bless my pastor today. Bless all those who endure untold frustration, hardship and persecution. Give them strength in their weakness and joy in their calling each day. In Your name I pray. Amen.

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#### Commentary:

Several years ago I led a class on how to study I Timothy. One of the creative approaches I recommended was to read I Timothy. Then write a hypothetical letter from Timothy to Paul reflecting the issues which Paul addressed in his letter. Here's an example.

To Paul, my beloved mentor in Christ.  
From Timothy, your son in Jesus Christ.

I can't believe *how hard* ministry is. Everywhere I go it seems that people are trying to destroy the church. You've probably heard of Hymenaeus and Alexander. They are simply wreaking havoc on the church...and tearing me apart (cf. I Timothy 1).

Why can't the government leave us alone? We are beaten down and persecuted. Many in the church are ready to start a violent rebellion against the ungodly Roman rulers. Frankly, I'm wondering how much persecution I can take "lying down" before I start urging the church to a more active—or militant—response (Cf. 2:1ff.). In the meantime, this issue is causing division in the churches.

Another problem I have is that some of the women are dressing like prostitutes. They wear so much jewelry and wear clothes that, frankly, send a strong message of immorality. I've tried to tell them it is not proper for the church. But the more I talk with them, the louder they protest. Why

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can't these women fall in line? Why can't they be quiet and focus on God's Word and His calling for them? What should I do, Paul? (cf. 2:8)

I'm also experiencing a leadership problem. It seems like everyone wants to be a pastor, overseer or deacon. Brand new converts are complaining that they can't be pastors. Some of my current leaders lead lives that, frankly, are downright immoral. What standards for leadership should the church have? What's God's will in this regard? (cf. 3:1ff.)

Paul, I truly am blessed sharing the ministry of the Gospel alongside you and others. But how long will this struggle go on? I'm becoming discouraged. It just seems that the power of Satan is getting more intense every day. Things seem to be getting worse...not better (cf. 4:1).

Is it just me? Am I the only one who experiences the frustration in the churches? Or is Satan working in ways I don't yet understand?

Brother Paul, you have been the greatest encouragement in my life. Please consider my letter and write me ASAP.

May the peace of God be with you.  
Timothy

Of course, this letter writing approach works on any New Testament Letter. In the case of I Timothy 4, perhaps this letter hints at Timothy's frustration and the urgency for Paul's "Last Times" encouragement in 4:1ff.

"The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth." (4:1-3)

In giving Timothy this reality check, Paul helped Timothy regain the proper perspective on what it meant to be a minister of the Gospel. In the remainder of chapter 4, Paul gave some additional coaching.

- 1) Consecrate everything with prayer (4:4)
- 2) Demonstrate you are a "good" (cf. Greek "*kalos*" meaning "noble" and "honorable") minister of the Gospel by "pointing out" the truth of God's Word in every situation (4:6)
- 3) Have nothing to do with old wives tales and myths (4:7)
- 4) Train yourself for godliness. Note the Greek word Paul used in the original, "*gymnazo*," literally means, "keep on exercising in the gym" (4:7)
- 5) Don't let people mock or disrespect you because of your age (4:12)

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- 6) Keep on preaching and teaching publicly (4:13)
  - 7) Don't neglect your ministry gift conferred on you by God through others who share in the ministry (4:14);
  - 8) And watch your life and doctrine closely.

Almost all pastors have needed these words spoken to them at some time in their ministry. No doubt Paul's words to Timothy have been repeated innumerable times to those who minister to the Church of Jesus Christ. In every age, Paul's words apply. "Be diligent in these matters," Paul wrote (4:15).

Though you may not be a pastor or even a paid staff member of a church or ministry, Paul's words to Timothy also apply to you.

- \* How diligent are you in "gymnizing" (cf. 4:7 "training and exercising") your faith?
- \* How closely are you watching your life and doctrine?
- \* Do you consecrate everything you do and desire with prayer?

Paul's words are not just for Timothy. They are for you. How will you respond?

**Prayer:**

Lord of the Church, I pray that you will encourage Pastors, Teachers and all who minister the Gospel in Your name. Uphold them in their frustrations, strengthen them in their weakness, and give them passion to incessantly teach Your Word. Keep them firm in the true doctrine and joyful in their calling. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Thomas F. Fischer

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