

# 1 Timothy 4

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, today, this church, this congregation is officially vacant.

One ministry has ended, and let me join with you in looking forward to the beginning of a new ministry, whatever shape that takes.

But this is an opportunity on this first day to think about not just who we might want to fill this pulpit, but what ministry is all about, what the job of a minister is.

And of course, that begs the question, what is the church all about? And what our responsibility is to attend and to listen and to make use of the ministry of the Word.

Ministry is something that affects us all, and that is why it's uppermost on your mind. That's why you are here today, and I'm hoping that you'll be with us later on to think about the process that we're going to go through in calling, hopefully successfully calling, your choice to be your next minister.

[ 1 : 25 ] Let's look at some of the features, then, of the minister. What do we mean by a minister? What is his job? What do we look for in a prospective minister?

It's all very well having a whole bunch of people coming here week after week to preach, but how do I know and what do I look for in a minister and the person that we all want to be, the next minister of Bon Accord?

Well, this question, like every other important question, can only be answered by going to the Bible. And I've picked this passage not because it gives us every piece of information, but because it gives me a lot of information that I want to draw on this morning.

I want to think about five features of your next minister, five things that you look for in someone who you are going to call to be your next pastor.

And the first of these is that he must be himself a worshiper. Anyone who's going to lead in worship must himself know what it is to worship.

[ 2 : 47 ] A minister doesn't stand aloof while you do the worshiping. He is the worship leader in the way that he is here to facilitate and to inspire you and to encourage you and to feed you and to draw you in worship.

And in order to do that, he himself must be a worshiper. And what does that mean? It means, first of all, that he himself personally must be a transformed man, a man who has been converted and changed by God himself, a man who is a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, you might say, well, come on, that's obvious. I mean, surely you can assume that. Well, I hope we can assume it, but there was a day when it couldn't be assumed.

And there are, unfortunately, some churches where it can't be assumed. They tell me that the famous Thomas Chalmers, who led the disruption in 1843, he was in the ministry before he had personally been transformed by God.

He was in the ministry because it was a respectable thing to do, as it was in those days. You went into the ministry the same way as you went into medicine or law or one of the professions.

[ 4 : 14 ] It was a respectable. Your father and mother would want you to follow this as a career, not necessarily because you were thoroughly devoted to the gospel, but because it was a respectable thing to do in society.

Well, I hope that things are not like that in our church. I hope that every person that comes into this pulpit will be a thoroughly transformed man.

Not a perfect man. You're not looking for a perfect person. You won't find it. But someone who has been touched and arrested by the gospel.

Someone who has himself repented of his sin and someone who has come to follow the Lord Jesus Christ and has a passion that others do likewise.

What does this chapter tell us? It tells us in verse 8 that physical training is of some value. By the way, this verse is not criticizing keeping fit.

[ 5 : 15 ] It's just simply comparing the value of spiritual exercise. It says godliness has value for all things.

You are looking for a godly man. First and foremost, a godly man. A man who doesn't just talk the talk, but who walks the walk.

A man who has been impacted by the gospel and someone who wants the same for others. And so, you're looking for a person who is himself a worshiper.

Someone who's come to see and to experience the Lord Jesus Christ in his own life. The second thing you're looking for, and don't get me wrong, by the way, I hope I'll explain this, your second thing you're looking for is a scholar.

I do not mean necessarily a PhD or an academic. But when I say a scholar is someone who has a thorough acquaintance with the Bible.

[ 6 : 28 ] There's a very neglected document. Some of you are doing the Saturday course. Well, I've heard me saying this before. But one of the most neglected documents in Scottish history is the Directory for Public Worship.

And I'm going to refer to the directory at several points during what I have to say here. Because I think it is one of the most important documents that you could read in order to discern what a minister is.

It has a section on preaching. And Sinclair Ferguson has described it as the best description of preaching that there is in the English language.

So, I think that's a pretty good commendation. Go away and read it. You'll get it online. Read the section on preaching. And that will bring you all the way back to what is a sermon.

And it begins with the idea of someone who is acquainted with the necessary components with which to teach a congregation.

[ 7 : 35 ] Now, like any teacher, you can't teach something unless you know something about it yourself. It's the same as anything. You can't teach a subject unless you know something about it yourself.

Neither can you teach the Bible unless you are thoroughly acquainted. Now, I didn't say perfectly acquainted. Nobody is in that position. But you're looking for someone who has studied the Scriptures and who has been trained in the study of the Scriptures.

You're looking for somebody who has the skills to be able to articulate that knowledge in a way which is meaningful and which is impactful to a congregation.

He must be a learner himself. That's what a scholar is. A scholar is not someone who's way up there. It's someone who himself has learned and submitted himself to the Bible.

Someone with a real passion for the Bible. Someone who has a Bible not just in his head but in his heart. And someone who has been impacted and changed by the Bible.

[ 8 : 54 ] That's what I mean by someone who is a scholar. What is it that Paul says? He says in Colossians, let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.

You're looking for a man who lets the Word of Christ dwell in him richly. And you can tell his passion for the Bible and his knowledge of it.

And it's a kind of knowledge that draws you in. I don't know if you can remember your teachers in school. I can remember the best teachers I had in school were the people that somehow drew you into what they were teaching.

And they created, they aroused an enthusiasm and a passion within the class. So that you were kind of locked onto them. I still remember one or two teachers we had in school.

That's the effect they had on us. They kind of just had this ability to kind of draw you into the subject. So that you wanted to know more and you wanted to be an expert. And you wanted to be where he was or she was.

[ 9 : 59 ] And you wanted to know and to read more. That's the kind of person you're looking for. Someone who will enthuse you about the gospel. Because after all, if you're not enthusiastic about the gospel, then I don't know what.

If you're not enthusiastic about the fact that God has come down into this world and has become a baby. And that God grew up as a baby into a child, into a boy, and into a man.

And he lived among us. And that he gave himself on the cross and rose again so that our sin could be forgiven. That's what the gospel is.

And if we're not enthusiastic about that, and if we can't preach that in such a way that will create enthusiasm in our hearers, then there's something really far wrong.

Someone who has a passion for the gospel. But not in some kind of superficial sense. We don't want just a bunch of sound bites.

[11:09] We want to get into the depths of what the gospel is. We want to really understand it. And we want to go away every Sunday having learned more about what God is saying to us and having been challenged by it.

And so you're looking for someone who has the word at his heart. And that should be evident as he expounds that word in the pulpit.

That here's a guy who really has been impacted. I can see the effect that this gospel has had on him. And I can see how he has studied it for years.

That's why I do what I do in ETS in Edinburgh. As our business is to try and train students for ministry.

To make them as acquainted with the Old and the New Testament. Even to the point where we teach them the original languages. The Hebrew and the Greek.

[12:12] Now that's a pain for them. I know. And we get moans and complaints. And they find it hard going and heavy going. And they think the work is too much and all the rest of it. And everyone complains about it.

And yet at the end. They are proficient. In the language in which the Old Testament and the New Testament. And I thank God for those who taught me.

The Old Testament. And the New Testament. Because they taught me treasures. That I will never ever forget. And that ought to come across.

In our preaching. And I'm speaking to myself by the way. Because all of us who preach in pulpits. We need to be rebuked. And we need to be encouraged.

By a constant reminder. Of how to develop. And how to improve. Our knowledge. And our presentation.

[13:09] So he must be a worshiper. And so he must be a scholar. The third thing he must be. Is a communicator. Verse 13. Until I come. Devote yourself to the public reading of scripture.

To preaching. And to teaching. Elsewhere. In the second book to Timothy. Paul says. Preach the word. Be ready in season. And out of season.

Reprove. Rebuke. And exhort. With complete patience. And understanding. And that begs the question. Doesn't it? What is a sermon? Have you ever asked that question?

Or is it something that you assume? What's a sermon? What's a good sermon? What's a bad sermon? I'm not. And please don't do this by the way. Please don't. Sit from now on with a score sheet.

Ticking off. You know. Nine out of ten. Eight out of ten. Ten out of ten for communicate. Please don't do that. I don't think that's the right way to judge. Prospective candidates.

[14:09] I don't think that's very healthy. Because. Some of the. Those who will come here. Will. Everyone's got different gifts.

Everybody's got different talents. But. It still begs the question. What is a sermon in the first place? A sermon. Again. If you go back to the directory for public worship.

It tells you in plain and simple terms. That a sermon is about the Bible. It's not about someone standing here. Talking and lecturing about their favorite topic.

Throwing in some funny stories in between. They're there to talk about the Bible. The Bible must be at the very heart. That's why. A church service.

Has the reading of the Bible. At its heart. And then the minister. Will go back to the reading. And he will then open it out. That's why we call. That's what we call an exposition.

[15:03] The question is when he not only explains. But he develops the theme. That is in the text. It could be one verse. It could be two verses. It could be a passage. But the minister's job is to expound that.

In such a way that will not only give you. An understanding of it. But will challenge you. In a remarkable way. Because this is the word of God.

And so a sermon starts off with the Bible. The directory goes on to talk about how a sermon should be structured. And sermons should be structured.

Because you know as well as I do. That if you sit on a Sunday morning. You remember. You tend to remember the sermons that are better structured. Than where they are.

Let's say not so well structured. You go away and you say. Well here are his three points. Or here are where his four points. Or his five points. And they don't all have to begin with P. They can be crafted.

[16:09] In different creative ways. But the idea is to give you something to take away with. Something to take away with you. Something that will embed itself.

In your consciousness. And in your mind. And in your heart. Something that you will chew on. And ruminate on. In the days that lie ahead. And so he has to be a communicator.

But he's not just some kind of slick salesman. You're not looking for somebody like that. The gift of the gab. In fact that's the last thing that you want. Someone who will just bowl you over. By his persuasiveness.

A communicator in the pulpit. Is someone who. Is able to. Open up the scriptures.

And to transmit it. By the power of the Holy Spirit. In a way that will. Make an impact. On both Christians.

[17:10] And hopefully people who are unbelievers. So a sermon begins with the Bible. It's the explanation of the Bible. And it's a confrontation.

We all need to be confronted by God's word. Don't we? Even those of you who have been on the Christian road for decades. You all need to be confronted. We all need to be corrected. And we need to be reminded again.

Of the deceitfulness of sin. If you look at the directory of public worship. There's this very, very intricate. Detailed description. Of how preachers need to confront people.

In plain and simple terms. Not holding back. We often say in the ministry. We're not in the ministry to be popular. And that's true.

I could say lots of popular things. In the pulpit. Things that would please you. But that's not what we're here to do. We are here to faithfully. And honestly.

[18:11] And plainly communicate God's word. The directory also talks about illustrations. Illustrations are important. Why are illustrations?

Because Jesus used illustrations. In order. The greatest preacher of all of course. Was the Lord Jesus Christ. And you remember the stories that he told. In order to get across.

The point. The good shepherd. The parables that he told. The lost sheep. The lost coin. The lost son. Now all of these were such powerful stories.

In order to drive home. The foundational scriptural truth. Of the gospel. So that's what you're looking for. Someone with that kind of skill.

Again. He's not going to be perfect. But. He ought to have that skill. Of being able to take the Bible. And to drive it home. Always depending on the power.

[19:09] Of the Holy Spirit. One of the most. One of the most. Powerful things. That the directory of public worship. Says. Is that the end result.

Of preaching. Ought to be. That the congregation. Listen to this. The congregation. Feel. The word. They use that term. I love that.

That's. That's what we're aiming for. That the congregation. Feel. The word. They feel. God speaking to them.

They feel the truth. Of this word. They feel their own vulnerability. They feel their own shame. As the word. Confronts us. With. Our own sin. And our own backsliding.

But they also feel. How the word. Draws them back. Into fellowship. With the Lord Jesus Christ. And the word. The same word. That condemns us. Is the word.

[20:06] That presents us. With Jesus. Who is our forgiveness. And our salvation. And who invites us. To come to him. And to trust in him. And to. To follow him.

And he promises us. Forgiveness. And everlasting life. I love that. Feel. The word. But then.

Fourthly. The pastor. Is more than. A preacher. A minister. Is more than. A preacher. I believe. He should be. Primarily.

A preacher. But I believe. He should be. More than that. And I believe. That the Bible. Backs me up on that. When it talks about. When it uses the word. Pastor.

Or episkopos. Or. It's sometimes translated. In the old AV. It's called a bishop. Well. Bishops are not. Old men. With. Funny hats. Bishops.

[ 21 : 01 ] Or pastors. Are overseers. And the idea. Is the shepherd. You're looking for. A shepherd. Someone. Who.

Who. Leads. And guides. And mixes. And. Relates. To. His sheep. And the shepherd. Motif. In the Bible. Runs all the way. Through the Bible. It's one of the central motifs. One of the central symbols. In the Bible. We sing it. The Lord is my shepherd.

I shall not want. Jesus. As well says. I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep. And my sheep. Know me. And the minister. Should be a reflection.

Of that relationship. Now we're not talking about. A Scottish shepherd. A Scottish shepherd. You don't get many of them. In Scotland. You get people who have sheep. And they just leave their sheep.

[ 21 : 57 ] In the fields. Because the weather's too bad. But in Middle Eastern countries. Where Jesus was. In Palestine. The shepherd. The shepherd. Lived with the sheep. He went out with them.

He led them. So he led. From the front. And so. He became. Intimately. Acquainted. With his sheep. He knew them. All by name.

And they knew. His voice. He was that. Acquainted with them. In other words. What I am saying. Is. You are looking. For. A people.

Person. Not somebody. Who shows up. On a Sunday. Goes into the pulpit. Preaches a brilliant sermon. And then. Goes home again. Of course.

That's not going to happen. But that's not what you're looking for. You're looking for someone. Who takes a deep interest. In you. Why? Because God.

[ 22 : 53 ] Takes a deep interest. In you. And this person. Must. Reflect. The love. And the care. That God gives you. That's what we mean.

By a pastor. A pastor. A pastor. A pastor. Is a person. Who. Rejoices. With those who rejoice. And who cries. With those who cry. A pastor. Is someone. Who is involved. And who is interested.

And who relates. Well. With his. With his. People. A pastor. Is an example. He should be seen. As well as being heard. Verse 15. Be diligent in these matters. Give yourself wholly to them. So that everyone. May see. See. Your progress. Timothy.

[ 23 : 48 ] You're not to be. A detached. Minister. You're not to. Live in the manse. On the hill. Where nobody can see you. Except once a week. You are to be.

Amongst. Your people. Now that might be. Taking someone out. For a coffee. Nowadays. It used to be. That the minister. Was required to. Visit all his people. And in some communities.

That still happens. In the highland communities. For example. That's still expected. But in a congregation. Like this. That may not be. What is expected. A more appropriate way. Of being amongst your people. Is to.

Meet you for coffee. Sometime. Or to. Have lunch together. Sometime. You know. If you've got half an hour. Free for lunch. Then let's meet for lunch. Or whatever. You have to think of.

Creative ways. To pastor your people. Not just. The minister's visit. That happens once a year. You know. You're expected to. Do a certain thing.

[ 24 : 45 ] You're expected to. Spend 20 minutes. In a home. And then disappear again. I don't know. If that was ever. Very effective. We as ministers.

Have to. Think up. Creative ways. Of getting to know. By the way. This is the same. Is true for elders. Those of you. Who are elders. Can't just sit back.

And let the minister. Do all the pastoring. You're all pastors. You are all shepherds. And so that means. That you need. To know.

Your sheep. Well enough. And to be acquainted. With them. Well enough. To know. When they run into difficulty. When they run into trouble. So that you can support them. And guide them. And restore them.

Perhaps back to. Right relationship. So you can sympathize with them. When they hit hard times. And when you can pray with them. So.

[ 25 : 40 ] You know. We don't just believe. In one man ministries. By the way. We believe in collective. Presbyterian. Elder led.

Ministries. And I hope. And I'm sure. And I'm confident. That you agree with me. In that. And then lastly. Your minister. Your next minister. Should be a leader.

A leader. Now I do not mean. That he should be a CEO. That's not the way. The church works. That's the way business works.

And it has to be that way. I remember. When I was in business. Many many years ago. You know. And when I went into the church. It took me years. To. To get my head around.

The difference. Between. The way that business worked. And the way that church worked. And church did my head in. Because. It was so much more complicated.

[ 26 : 37 ] Than business. In business. If you're the boss. You just say it. And that's it. It gets done. It gets done. It's not the way it happens. In the church. Leadership in the church.

Begins. With what Jesus did. To his disciples. When he washed their feet. Leadership in the church. Is servant leadership.

He that will be great. Amongst you. Said Jesus. Must be the servant. Of all. And Jesus. Led by his own. Example. Who's the greatest leader. In all the world.

Jesus Christ. What did he do? He washed the feet. Of his disciples. Now that's not the way. The world outside works. But it's the way.

The church has to work. Secondly. As well as being. A servant leadership. Leadership has to be. Collective. It's not one man.

[ 27 : 34 ] Dominating. Over the whole congregation. You don't want. A tyrant. To be your minister. Minister. It's actually quite easy. When that happens. Isn't it? It's quite easy. Just to do. The easiest thing.

In the world. In some. Areas of life. Is just to do. What you're told. Isn't it? To have a boss. They say. Go here. And you go. They say. Go there. And you go.

That's not the way. You don't want that. In a minister. You want someone. Who will. Lead. By inspiration. And example. Who will lead.

Cohortatively. Do you know what that word means? It's a word I. I learned. Way back. When I was in seminary. Cohortatively. Is a sentence. That begins with. Let's do this.

You're presupposing. A group of you. And one of you says. Right. Let's do this. And that's the way. That leadership. In the church works. You inspire others. You draw others. You get the mind.

[ 28 : 31 ] Of others. You. You. You. You. Unite people. Around your vision. And you're looking for a guy. With a vision. And who's going to draw people. And unite people. Around that vision.

For how to progress. Bon accord. Into the future. But he's going to do it. And not in a. In an offensive way. Or in a. In a tyrannical way. Or in a nasty way.

You don't want a dictator. You want someone. Who's going to inspire you. And enthuse you. And who's going to lead you. Collectively. And collegiately. Into the future.

He's going to start with the elders. By enthusing them. And drawing them. Into unity. And that unity. Is going to spread. In throughout the congregation. And it's going to bring you. Into future progress. As you seek to serve God. And as you seek to present the gospel. To a lost. And a dark. And a helpless. And a desperate society.

[ 29 : 31 ] So. Who is this perfect guy. I don't know. I have no idea. We're not looking for perfection. Don't look for perfection.

You're not going to find it anywhere. Who is this ideal minister. I have absolutely no idea. You have to pray.

That you'll recognize. That person. When you see him. When you hear him. As you get to know him. Which hopefully you will. And as you're praying. That God will open your eyes.

And that God will open his eyes. That he will. Fall in love with this congregation. With you. And that you will fall in love with him.

That you will. Want to listen. To his preaching. And to. To be honest with him. In your conversation. To open up. To be personal with him. To ask him for help.

[ 30 : 29 ] When you need help. That's something we're not very good at. Is it? We're not good at asking for help. We're not good at opening up.

Being personal. Being honest. Ministry is. A two-way thing. He's not going to. He can't be a good pastor.

Unless you are prepared. He's not going to. To share your life with him. And to bring him into your problems. And your difficulties. And your doubts.

And your backslidings. And allow him to help you. And pray with you. And relate to you. So I hope. That. This passage. And these five things. Have helped us. He's given us some. I hope. Direction. In what to look for. No doubt.

[ 31 : 22 ] There are other qualities. That I've not been able. I haven't had time. To mention. Today. But I hope. That we have an idea. Now. As we. Hear different people. And as the vacancy committee.

Is formed. And as various suggestions. Are made. As no doubt. They will. That the Lord. In his sovereignty. And in his goodness. Will be providing. Even right now.

Be preparing someone. To come here. Someone who you will recognize. And someone who will call. You'll call. And someone who will say yes.

To that call. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven. We pray that. You will. Restore us to our right. And a high view. Of ministry.

Our Father. Forgive us. For the caricatures. That have often been created. The pathetic caricatures. The.

[ 32 : 18 ] Weak caricatures. Of what ministers are. And going around. Homes. And drinking tea. And. Having nice conversation. With people. Keep us away. From such.

Such an affront. To the gospel. Lord God. We pray that. As we. Enter into. This. Period of vacancy. That you will give.

Prayerfulness. To our dear friends here. And that you will. Bind them together. In love. And in fellowship. With one another. We pray that they may.

That they may be patient. With one another. And that they may be patient. With you. Because. Sometimes. You leave things. Longer than we expect.

In order to test us. And so we pray that. This congregation. Will pass the test. That they will become. Stronger and stronger. Even.

[ 33 : 15 ] At a time. Of unsettlement. Like this. Our father in heaven. May your word. Dwell within us. Richly. And give us an. Ever greater. Love for it.

In Jesus name. Amen.