

EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Finishing Well—Doing What’s Best in the Challenges of Ministry

The Dos and Don’ts of Ministry

1 Timothy 4:6–16



LET’S BEGIN HERE

Let’s see a show of hands. Who in their professional lives wants to be unsuccessful? No one, right? Most professions have a set of procedures—a list of dos and don’ts—that, if followed, promote success. Ministry is no different. Beginning in 1 Timothy 4:6 and continuing through the rest of the letter, Paul turns our attention to the one who seeks to be “a good servant of Christ Jesus,” namely, the minister. Paul starts off by outlining a list of dos and don’ts for effective ministry, focusing first on the pastor’s personal ministry (1 Timothy 4:7–11) and then on the pastor’s public ministry (4:12–16).



LET’S DIG DEEPER

1. A Major Goal of All Ministry (1 Timothy 4:6)

No church makes it a goal to inflict spiritual frostbite on its people. But many do so unwittingly by the pastors they choose. Some want a man they can intimidate, manipulate, and control—a virtual slave to the congregation’s whims and wants. Others want a celebrity—one who can wow a crowd and attract media attention. But neither is what God looks for in a pastor. God wants a heart ablaze for Him.

2. Guidelines to Follow in Pursuing the Goal (1 Timothy 4:7–16)

Like a hot bowl of soup on a cold winter’s day, so a constant diet of God’s Word served from an authentic, engaged, and growing pastor will help all of us meet the goal of being good servants of Christ. But what distinguishes a good servant? Paul provided a list of dos and don’ts—positive and negative commands—that will keep the spiritual fires burning.



Quotable

There’s no more effective style of preaching than exposition—proclaiming and explaining the Scriptures.

—Charles R. Swindoll



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GETTING TO THE ROOT

Godliness: Awe—Then Action!

Professor Howard Hendricks shocked a class of young seminarians with this statement attributed to Robert Murray M’Cheyne: “My people’s greatest need is my personal holiness.”¹ Few, if any, of those sitting in class that day had ever thought their personal godliness was so important to the needs of their future congregations. If surveyed, the students would have indicated that the faithful preaching of God’s Word was a congregation’s greatest need. What those students didn’t know then—and what many pastors don’t know now—is that few things sour the spiritual stomach more than a biblical meal served with the dirty hands of deceit, by one covered in the stench of sin.

When Paul told Timothy to exercise himself for “godliness,” he used the word *eusebeia*, which means “reverence, respect, piety toward God.”² The term occurs fifteen times in the New Testament, thirteen in the Pastoral Letters of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, and a whopping nine times in 1 Timothy alone (2:2, 10; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11). Because the Pastoral Letters are the last written by Paul, his call to godliness is hot with urgency.

Godliness, however, is not a stained glass word for worship. It doesn’t describe serene expressions, bowed heads, or folded hands. It’s not a word for the monastery or nunnery. *Godliness* is alive and active. It marches out into the world and shines the light of faith. It’s the Isaiah-like obedience of a man awestruck by the person and presence of God, rising to his feet and saying, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8). It is “Awe—then action!”³ Only the God-struck doers of the Word are rightfully called godly.



LET’S LIVE IT

Paul’s dos and don’ts provide a practical checklist for effective ministry. But five lasting lessons are worth remembering as we close out this message.

First, *there’s no higher goal in ministry than servanthood.*

Second, *there’s no greater temptation in ministry than extremism.*



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Third, *there’s no more important responsibility in ministry than the public reading and explanation of Scripture, followed by application and exhortation.*

Fourth, *there’s no more effective means of spiritual leadership than a growing minister.*

Fifth, *there’s no better proof of an authentic ministry than perseverance.*

What did Paul command Timothy to do in 2 Timothy 2:1–5? Why?

What would Paul’s command to Timothy look like in your life or ministry?

ENDNOTES

1. Howard G. Hendricks, “Teaching Objectives,” in class Dynamics of Leadership (lecture, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Sept. 7, 1989).
2. Kenneth S. Wuest, “The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament,” in *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 70.
3. R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2000), 105.



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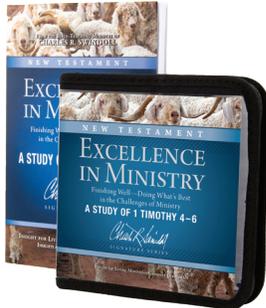
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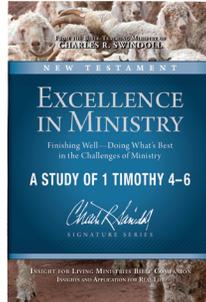
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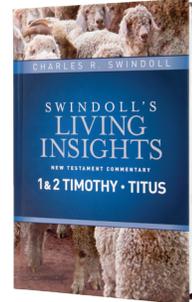
Tools for Digging Deeper



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