A Healthy Ministry

A Family of Faith (1 Tim. 4:1-16)

Introduction

- Soccer requires one of the highest levels of fitness in sports; that's why it's shocking when a soccer player collapses on the field. In 2003, a professional soccer player from Cameroon named Marc-Vivien Foé suffered a heart attack on the pitch and refused to be taken out of the game. His condition was not immediately obvious, but eventually he collapsed and could not be resuscitated. Later, an autopsy showed that he suffered from *hypertrophic cardiomyopathy,* a genetic condition that causes severe heart issues even in the fittest athletes.
- Church health has become a big issue in recent years as congregations have struggled to navigate various shifts and trends in our culture.
- But then again, church health has been an issue since New Testament times when the Apostle Paul addressed it in 1 Timothy ch. 4.
  - He lists 7 things that a minister can do to build a healthy church.
  - This passage is intensely personal & practical, as Paul teaches his mentee, Timothy, how to be a healthy minister.
  - That's because the first step to healthy ministries is a healthy minister.
- In short, this passage says that **healthy ministers train with the truth and teach it to others.** (*Read the passage & pray)*
  - I'm eager to share these 7 priorities with you because we all have a part to play in building a healthy and growing church.
  - Those who have been called as ministers & those who've been called to participate in those ministries.
  - The first activity is the only negative one; after that, they are all positive.

Body

I. <u>Prevent</u> False Teaching (v. 1-6)

A. False teaching is anything that distracts from our distorts the gospel.

1. Satan distorted God's Word in the Garden & deceived the first couple.

2. Satan tried to tempt Christ by twisting the Scripture away from the truth.

B. False teaching takes God's gifts and turns them into a source of merit.

1. Discouraging marriage, abstaining from certain foods.

2. False teaching distorts the gospel with works-based salvation.

II. <u>Pursue</u> Godliness (4:7-10)

A. Being a disciple takes discipline – being trained toward godliness.

1. That means avoiding "Bible trivial pursuit."

2. Paul spelled out his approach to ministry in 1 Cor. 9:24-27

B. Verse 10 tackles the question of motivation – is it worth it?

1. If our hope is in ourselves or our own ability to achieve, we give up.

2. If our hope is in God, we'll press on even when it' tough

III. <u>Persuade</u> Others with Scripture (4:11)

A. Most other translations except the NASB start verse 11 w/ "command."

1. Healthy ministry requires both commanding & teaching.

2. Healthy ministry also requires teaching & setting the example.

B. D.L. Moody said, "The Bible was not given for our information, but for our transformation." We are bombarded with information all the time, but very little of it changes our lives.

IV. Set a <u>Pattern</u> for Others To Follow (4:12)

A. Timothy was probably a relatively young man (in his 30's)

1. The people in Ephesus may have chafed at the idea of receiving instruction from someone who was younger.

2. Paul urged Timothy to reinforce his teaching with certain traits.

a. Public traits: godly speech and conduct.

b. Private traits: love, faith, and purity

B. A pattern is to be followed. If you want to sew a garment or build a wooden project, you must make sure all the angles & measurements come together.

V. Make Scripture the <u>Primary</u> Focus (4:13)

A. This emphasis has been implied throughout – focus on Scripture.

B. This is why I prefer expository preaching over topical preaching.

1. Both approaches to preaching use the Bible.

2. "Explaining preaching" focuses on the tone, form, & structure of Scripture.

VI. <u>Put</u> Their Spiritual Gifts to Good Use (4:14)

A. God revealed the gifts He had given Tim. through a prophecy (1:18).

B. The church recognized Timothy's gifts and affirmed them by ordaining him to the gospel ministry.

C. 1 Peter 4:11 describes spiritual gifts in 2 broad categories: speaking & service.

1. It's hard to quantify the problem of unused gifts, but it may help to think about it like unused gift cards. It's estimated that 1 billion is unused gift cards expire every year – maybe you have some? What a waste!

2. Spiritual gifts are for others, not just for us, so we must make them available.

VII. <u>Persevere</u> to the End (4:15-16)

A. You may be familiar with the call to "persevere," but how?

1. Be diligent with these things and make progress overtime.

2. Pay attention to your life and teaching – we are all teaching others through the way we live our life.

B. You can either steer them towards God or away from God.

Conclusion

- **Healthy ministers train with the truth and teach it to others.**
  - **Healthy ministers are shaped by the gospel of Jesus Christ.**
  - Their personal identity & approach to ministry rest in the death, burial, & resurrection.
  - **Healthy ministries are shaped by the gospel of Jesus Christ.**
  - Sharing the gospel w/unbelievers & teaching believers to live transformed.
- Health in a church isn't always obvious. It's not the same thing as having a big, nice building. It doesn't happen automatically when you achieve "megachurch" status. The church is a family of faith that rests on the truth of God's Word.