

1 Timothy 3:14–4:16

Who We (the Church) Are

In these verses, Paul speaks of the high value God places on the Church (His people).

Verse 15 is the theme verse which frames the entire letter:

“You will know how people must conduct themselves in the household of God. This is the church of the living God, which is the pillar and foundation of the truth.”

Verses 14–15 and tell us of the **significance of the Church**:

1. We are God’s family
 - a. We are to operate under God’s rules and God’s direction
2. We are the dwelling place of God’s presence
 - a. Verse 15 – “this is the church of the living God”
 - b. The people at Ephesus may have remembered Jacob’s story where he wrestled with God at Bethel (*Bethel* means “house of God”)
 - c. Exodus 25:8 says, “so that I may dwell among them”
3. We are the guardians of God’s Word
 - a. Verse 15 – “pillar and foundation of truth”
 - b. The people in Ephesus would have understood this imagery of the pillar. The temple of Diana in Ephesus

was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It had one hundred strong columns all around it.

- c. The Church has the privilege and responsibility of preserving God's Word
 - i. We must pass this Word on and protect what gets passed on
- d. The Church must proclaim God's Word
 - i. We must hold the Word of God high; not man's opinion, man's innovations, man's creativity, man's wisdom, and man's possessions
 - ii. We must magnify the Word of God simply as it is

The one thing that motivates (or should motivate) Christians is that GOD DWELLS AMONG US AND WITHIN US!

"Even so, if unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your church meeting and hear everyone speaking in an unknown language, they will think you are crazy. But if all of you are prophesying, and unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your meeting, they will be convicted of sin and judged by what you say. As they listen, their secret thoughts will be exposed, and they will fall to their knees and worship God, declaring, "God is truly here among you." (1 Corinthians 14:23–25)

Practical application for today:

Do our churches look like what is described in the above Scripture? Do people encounter God's presence the moment they walk in the church doors? Do people encounter God's presence when they are with you?

Verse 16 speaks of the **Supremacy of Christ**

Without question, this is the great mystery of our faith:

Christ was revealed in a human body
and vindicated by the Spirit.

He was seen by angels
and announced to the nations.

He was believed in throughout the world
and taken to heaven in glory.

1. The word "godliness" is one Paul used often in this letter.
He uses the word nine different times in this letter.

a. To have godliness is to have God-consciousness—a
God-centeredness that permeates everything you
do

b. Having godliness means being centered around God

2. What is the mystery of godliness?

a. It is the thing that was hidden for a time but has now
been revealed. That mystery is Christ (1 Timothy
3:16)

b. The Church shouldn't just act good. The Church
should act in accordance with who Christ is and
what He accomplished through his life, death,
burial, and resurrection.

- i. Jesus revealed is the mystery of godliness because He displays the majesty of God
- ii. Jesus was manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16)
- iii. Jesus was verified by the Spirit (Matthew 3:16–17 and Romans 8:11)
- iv. Jesus was praised among the heavens (Luke 2:13–14, Matthew 28:1-7, and Acts 1:9–11)
- v. Jesus was proclaimed across the earth (1 Timothy 3:16)
- vi. Jesus is the savior of all the world. He is believed on in the world...right at this very moment.
- vii. Jesus is the King over all the universe (He is in us! 1 John 4:4 and Colossians 1:27)

There is nothing else like the Church in all the world. This should shape the way we live and do life with those within the Church so that we can be the church outside the walls of the church.

What We (the Church) Do

1 Timothy 4:1–16

This part of the letter serves as the personal instructions Paul gives to Timothy.

1 Timothy 4:1 uses the term “later times.” This is the New Testament’s description of the period of time between Jesus’ ascension into heaven and His second coming from heaven.

These are the following things we (the Church) must do:

1. We must detect error in the Church.

- a. Verse 1 references false teachings as demonic teaching through deceptive teachers.
- b. Verse 2 – consciences are seared (numbed over time which eventually leads to a deadening of awareness or a lack of care about)
- c. Verse 7 – men and women who either don't know the truth or have forgotten the truth and instead spread lies and myths.

Note: These people don't go around shouting they are false teachers. Instead, these people often stand on platforms and claim to speak truth.

In Acts 20:30, Paul was speaking to the elders at Ephesus. Some of these people may very well be the same people he was talking to at one point.

“Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following.” (Acts 20:30)

False teaching wasn't just rampant back then, it is rampant now, too.

2. We should not be surprised by false teachers (In 1 John 2:19 John mentions people who have left the church). What instead should we do when these things happen?

1. Guard your heart and do not let the choices of others within the Church affect your faith.
2. We should be saddened by false teachers because of the eternal disaster that befalls their false teaching. Our hearts should literally break.
3. Use the Word to wage war against false teaching.
 - a. We need to consider the substance of what is being taught.
 - i. Root of false teaching has two specific errors (1 Timothy 4:3–10):
 1. False teachers deny the goodness of God
 2. False teachers distort the Word of God.

(This is exactly what the slippery snake did to Eve in the Garden (Genesis 3:1).)

False teachers in 1 Timothy 4 were teaching that certain foods should not be eaten and people shouldn't get married. They were going after the two basic appetites of a human—sex and hunger. These are natural things put into place by God, but they can be abused if used improperly. Some early teachers were arguing that both of these things—food and marriage (sex)—were unclean, and quite possibly evil. They taught that the only way to holiness was complete abstinence from these unclean things.

This thought started with the Jewish people, and then wove its way into Greek philosophy (especially with Gnosticism which regarded matter as evil and despised the material creation). The early church father, Tertullian regarded virginity as always higher and holier than marriage (which is completely false). Some are called to singleness (or at least that is how their life works out) but marriage was designed by God.

- Theological test: creation: (1 Timothy 4:3–5)
 - a. Marriage and food are gifts from God and are to be received with thanksgiving.
 - b. God creates good things...not that everything is good. There is a difference when it is viewed in the proper context.
- Ethical test: godliness: (1 Timothy 4:6–10)
 - a. What Paul taught to Timothy, Timothy must teach to others. If we don't teach the Word, and actually practice the Word, it is not wrong, we simply fail to act.
 - b. Good ministers instruct the people in the Word and nourish themselves with the Word.
 - c. Good teachers must be teachable and spend time diligently "training" for their calling.
 - d. Keep a reverence for God as a way to work out godliness.
 - e. Feed ourselves the Word and live it out.
 - f. Godliness prepares us for eternity. Our exercise then should have an eternal focus to it.

Sandalfeet Ministries

3. True teaching (1 Timothy 4:11–16):

Paul instructs and reminds Timothy that it is his job to command and teach the things Paul has told him in this letter up to this point. Timothy wasn't simply to read the letter and set it aside. This letter had important—eternal—meaning for not only the church at Ephesus but for us today.

Timothy was still in his thirties and considered “young” by age and by spiritual maturity.

Paul switches his emphasis here from detecting error to reminding Timothy that he had been given the authority and the responsibility to dispense truth. Paul told Timothy not to worry about his age and what other people might think about his young age, but to make sure he set an example in everything he did. “People would be watching” and if they were watching, Timothy better make the choice to do the right thing.

Some people may not have respected Timothy because of his young age (he was being elevated above the elders because Paul had left him in charge of the church). The older folks might also have been jealous of Timothy's appointment. Regardless, that was their issue and not Timothy's. Timothy needed to stay focused on the gift he had received from God when he was called out and hands were laid on him to send him out. We are not exactly sure what this specific gift was (whether it was teaching, exhortation, mercy) but regardless, Timothy was to strengthen his gift by exercising his gift.

Paul stated here “Until I come” (verse 13). Timothy was working under the authority of Paul here. These letters were to be read out loud to the church (after an Old Testament reading). Churches operate today with an Old Testament reading and a New Testament reading (this letter would have been their New Testament reading). Paul would use this as an opportunity to remind the church that Paul had authorized Timothy to go in his place to deliver this message and teach. This was important at that time because the church was early in its formation.

Age refers to both actual age and spiritual age. Do not let people discourage you based on age. If, like Timothy, one has received a gift and been instructed and sent out to operate in that gift, people need to not tune people out solely based on age.

As we exercise our gift, people will see the progress we are making in our gifting. If we never do anything with our gift, it is like a piece of wood that never gets carved. It sits there with a purpose but is never brought to completion. Christians should always progress in their callings. We should never be content to remain stagnant nor live off past events. We should be actively engaged until Jesus calls us home.

Lastly, Paul instructed Timothy to watch his life and his doctrine closely. We need to take daily account of our lives (our character and our conduct). We need to be sure and be clean vessels planting seeds of life. We need to repent and confess our sin, when necessary. We also need to make sure we closely monitor

the doctrine we are teaching to others. Does it line up with the Word of God? Do not allow yourself to be swayed by the opinions of others and/or the culture and instead remain true to biblical truth.

If we take care of ourselves and our relationship with Christ (we need to remember to nurture our relationship with the Lord or we will have a hard time ministering to others), this has eternal benefits for those who hear what we say and teach.

By staying focused on the Gospel, we are daily reminded of Jesus' sacrifice for us and the gift it is from God. Secondly, the early church was responsible for disseminating the message of the Gospel. By speaking truth, they literally had the ability to preach salvation to people. If they didn't deliver the message at all, or delivered it incorrectly, it could mean the difference between life and death for a person. The same is true for us today. Our love for God should overflow onto our love for people.

My ten-year old son told me yesterday on a car ride home, "Mom, do you know what the saddest thing for me is? That people will die and go to hell for all eternity. They will have no relief for all eternity. This makes me so sad. Why would people want to endure fire forever?" My response, "I don't know. All I know is it is our job to share the Gospel. We are to love God and love others and live out our faith by sharing the gift God is offering."

Practical application for today:

- 1) How are you using your gift(s)?
- 2) Are you progressing in your gift(s)?
- 3) What do people say about you or think about you when others mention your name? What is the first thing that comes to mind when they think of you?
- 4) Are you able to recognize errors taught by false teachers? Why or why not?