

Persevering in Ministry

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Introduction

There is an integral connection between our personal walk with God and our ministry. Much of what Paul says to Timothy is related to maintaining his own spiritual vitality while he engages in pastoral ministry. Paul says this in 1 Timothy 4:6–16:

- Train yourself for godliness. (v. 7)
- Set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in faith, in purity. (v. 12)
- Practice these things, immerse yourself in them. (v. 15)
- Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. (v. 16)

Our goal is to identify some of the unique pressures and temptations that people face in one another ministry that may contribute to spiritual decline, and to identify practical ways you can cultivate your spiritual life in the midst of serving others.

The warning signs of spiritual decline

If you see warning signs in your life, then you don't want to walk away from the mirror and forget what you've seen (James 1:23–24), and you don't want to postpone reaching out to the overseer of your soul (1 Peter 2:25).

Temptations that erode spiritual vitality

1. The temptation to traffic in truth without being impacted ourselves
2. The temptation to not admit weakness and be vulnerable with others

Pressures that erode spiritual vitality

1. The pressure that comes from relentless exposure to evil and suffering in ministry
2. The pressure of increased spiritual warfare

Practical ways to cultivate spiritual vitality

You can't persevere in ministry on your own. Take time to sit and pray, to read and meditate on Scripture, to attend corporate worship, to participate in the sacraments, and to have heart-oriented conversations.

1. Engage with God in the moment—don't sleepwalk through your Christian life
2. Taste and see the Lord's goodness—God's truth is experiential truth
3. Cultivate thankfulness for the day and be ruthless with discontent
4. Share your heart regularly with a trusted friend or mentor

Being faithful to the end

Consider the woman in ministry who experienced much suffering and pressure in ministry. She said, "I used to want to do great things for God. Now I want to be faithful to the end."

This is a glorious, humble admission of her desire to finish the race and persevere to the end (see 2 Timothy 4:7; Acts 20:24). This woman was someone who watched her life closely and lived in dependence on the Lord.