

Welcome to Promise Land Bible Church  
We're glad you're here!



An open Bible is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with text, and the background is a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds. The text is overlaid in a large, bold, black font.

# **How to be a Man of God**

**Scripture text: 1 Timothy 4**

If you were to write a job description for your pastor, what would it contain? How would it compare with the description he might write? A pastor preaches regularly, performs weddings and other Christian services, visits the sick, and counsels the distressed. But what is his ministry, and what kind of person must he be to fulfill his God-given ministry?

In this section of his letter to Timothy, Paul emphasized **the character and the work of the minister himself**; and he listed **these qualities that a minister must possess if he is to be successful in serving God**.

# **A Good Minister, Preaching the Word (1 Tim. 4:1–6)**

Paul had **warned the Ephesian elders that false teachers would invade the church (Acts 20:28–31); and now they had arrived.**

The Holy Spirit had spoken in specific terms about these teachers, and the prophecy was starting to be fulfilled in Paul's time. Certainly it is fulfilled in our own time! **We can recognize false teachers by the description** Paul gave in this paragraph.

**Act 20:26-31** Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, **for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.** Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. **I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;** and from among your own selves **will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.** Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years **I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears.**

# 1.) **These False Teachers are energized by Satan (v. 1a).**

This is the only place where demons are mentioned in the Pastoral Epistles. Just as there is a “mystery of godliness” concerning Christ (1 Tim. 3:16), **so there is a “mystery of iniquity”** that surrounds Satan and his work (2 Thes. 2:7).

**Satan is an imitator** (2 Cor. 11:13–15); he has his own ministers and doctrines, and seeks to deceive God’s people and lead them astray (2 Cor. 11:3). **The first test of any religious doctrine is what it says about Jesus Christ** (1 John 4:1–6).

**2 Thessalonians 2:7-12** For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then **the lawless one will be revealed**, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. The coming of **the lawless one is by the activity of Satan** with all power and false signs and wonders, and with **all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.** Therefore God sends them a **strong delusion**, so that they may believe what is false, in order **that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**

**2 Corinthians 11:13-15** For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, **disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.** And no wonder, for **even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.** So it is no surprise if his servants, also, **disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.** **Their end will correspond to their deeds.**

**2 Corinthians 11:3** But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, **your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.**



**1 John 4:1-6** Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits to see whether they are from God**, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. **By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God**, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, **you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world**. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. **Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.**

**It comes as a shock to some people that Satan uses professed Christians in the church to accomplish his work.** But Satan once used Peter to try to lead Jesus on a wrong path (Matt. 16:21–23), and he used Ananias and Sapphira to try to deceive the church at Jerusalem (Acts 5). Paul warned that false teachers would arise from within the church (Acts 20:30).

**Matthew 16:23** But he turned and said to Peter, "**Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.**"

**2.) They lead people astray (v. 1b).**

**Their goal is to seduce people and get them to depart from the faith.** This is the word apostasy, and it is defined as **“a willful turning away from the truth of the Christian faith.”**

**These false teachers do not try to build up the church** or relate people to the Lord Jesus Christ in a deeper way. Instead **they want to get disciples to follow them** and join their groups and promote their programs. **This is one difference between a true church and a religious cult:**

**A true church seeks to win converts to Jesus Christ and to build them spiritually;** conversely, a cult proselytizes, steals converts from others, and makes them servants (even slaves!) of the leaders of the cult. However, not all apostates are in cults; some of them are in churches and pulpits, teaching false doctrine and leading people astray.

**Ephesians 4:11-12** And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, **to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,**

**3.) They are hypocrites (v. 2).**

**“Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:15–20).**

**These false teachers preach one thing but practice another.** They tell their disciples what to do, but they do not do it themselves. Satan works “by means of the hypocrisy of liars” (1 Tim. 4:2, literal translation).

**One of the marks of a true servant of God is his honesty and integrity: He practices what he preaches.** This does not mean he is sinlessly perfect, but that **he sincerely seeks to obey the Word of God.** He tries to maintain a good conscience (see 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 3:9).

**Matthew 7:15-20** "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. **A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.**

The word seared means “cauterized.” Just as a person’s flesh can be “branded” so that it becomes hard and without feeling, so a person’s conscience can be deadened.

**Whenever we affirm with our lips something that we deny with our lives** (whether people know it or not), **we deaden our consciences just a little more.** Jesus made it clear that it is not religious talk or even performing miracles that qualifies a person for heaven, **but doing God’s will in everyday life** (Matt. 7:21–29).

**Matthew 7:24-29** "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.



An apostate is not just wrong doctrinally; he is wrong morally. **His personal life became wrong before his doctrines were changed.**

In fact, it is likely that he changed his teachings so that he could continue his sinful living and pacify his conscience.

**Believing and behaving always go together.**

#### **4.) They deny God's Word (vv. 3–5).**

**The false teachers in Ephesus combined Jewish legalism with Eastern asceticism.** You find Paul dealing with this same false doctrine in his Letter to the Colossians (Col. 2:8–23 especially).

**Colossians 2:8-10 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.** For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

**Colossians 2:16-19** Therefore **let no one pass judgment on you** in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. **Let no one disqualify you**, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and **not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.**

For one thing, the false teachers taught that an unmarried life was more spiritual than a married life, **which is contrary to Scripture.**

“It is not good that the man should be alone” are God’s own words (Gen. 2:18). Jesus put His seal of approval on marriage (Matt. 19:1–9), though He pointed out that not everybody is supposed to marry (Matt. 19:10–12). Paul also affirmed the biblical basis for marriage (1 Cor. 7:1–24), teaching that each person **should follow the will of God in the matter.**

**Proverb 18:22** He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD.

**Matthew 19:3-7** And Pharisees came up to him and **tested him** by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" He answered, "**Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female**, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and **hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh**'? So they are **no longer two but one flesh**. **What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.**" They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?"

**Matthew 19:8-12** He said to them, "**Because of your hardness of heart** Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but **from the beginning it was not so**. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, **except for sexual immorality**, and marries another, commits adultery." The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." But he said to them, "**Not everyone can receive this saying**, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs **for the sake of the kingdom of heaven**. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it."

**Beware of any religious teaching that tampers with God's institution of marriage. And beware of any teaching that tampers with God's creation.**

The false teachers who **were infecting the Ephesian church** taught that **certain foods were taboo**; if you ate them, you were not spiritual. The fact that God called His own Creation "good" (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25) did not interest these teachers. **Their authority to dictate diets gave them power over their converts.**

**Those who "believe and know the truth" are not impressed with the do's and don'ts of the legalists.**

Jesus stated that **all foods are clean** (Mark 7:14–23).

**Mark 7:18-23** And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? **Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him**, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (**Thus he declared all foods clean.**) And he said, "**What comes out of a person is what defiles him.** For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. **All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.**"



He taught this lesson again to Peter (Acts 10), and reaffirmed it through Paul (1 Cor. 10:23–33).

A person may not be able to eat certain foods for physical reasons (an allergy, for example); but **no food is to be rejected for spiritual reasons**. We should not, however, use our freedom to eat and drink to destroy weaker Christians (Rom. 14:13–23). The food we eat is sanctified (set apart, devoted to God) when we pray and give thanks; so the Word of God and prayer turn even an ordinary meal into a spiritual service for God's glory (1 Cor. 10:31).

**The emphasis in a minister's life should be on "the Word of God and prayer"** (1 Tim. 4:5). It is tragic when a church keeps its pastors so busy with menial tasks that they have hardly any time for God's Word and prayer (Acts 6:1–7). Paul reminded young Timothy of his great responsibility to study, teach, and preach the Scriptures, and to spend time in prayer. As a "good minister" he must be "nourished up in the words of faith" (1 Tim. 4:6).

**Timothy had certain responsibilities in the light of this growing apostasy:**

**Teach the church the truth** (v. 6a). God's people need **to be warned about false doctrine and religious apostasy**. A minister must not major on these subjects, because **he is obligated to teach "all the counsel of God"** (Acts 20:27); but neither should he ignore them. As we travel the streets and highways, we see **two kinds of signs**: those that tell us **where we are going** ("Boston 45 miles") and those that **warn us of possible dangers** ("Bridge Out!"). A pastor must teach positive doctrine so that people will know what they believe and where they are going. But he must also expose false doctrine so that people will not be seduced and led astray.

He must nourish himself in the Word (v. 6b). Of course, every Christian ought to feed daily on the Word (Jer. 15:16; Matt. 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2); but it is especially important that a pastor grow in the Word.

It is by daily studying the “good doctrine” and meditating on the Word that he grows in the Lord and **is able to lead the church.**

The “good minister” **preaches the Word that he himself feeds on day by day.** But it is not enough to preach the Word; **he must also practice it.**

# A Godly Minister, Practicing the Word (1 Tim. 4:7–12)

Paul shifted to an athletic illustration at this point in his letter. Just as a Greek or Roman athlete had to refuse certain things, eat the right food, and do the right exercises, **so a Christian should practice “spiritual exercise.”** If a Christian puts as much energy and discipline into his spiritual life as an athlete does into his game, **the Christian grows faster and accomplishes much more for God.** Paul discussed in this section three levels of life.

**The bad**—“profane and old wives’ fables” (v. 7a).

These are, of course, the false teachings and traditions of the apostates. **These doctrines have no basis in Scripture; in fact, they contradict the Word of God.** They are the kind of teachings that silly people would discuss, not dedicated men and women of the Word! No doubt these teachings involved the false doctrines just named (1 Tim. 4:2–3). Paul also warned Titus about “**Jewish fables**” (Titus 1:14). Paul warned Timothy about these same “fables” in his second letter (2 Tim. 4:4).

**A believer cannot rediscover new doctrines.**

Paul admonished Timothy **to remain true to “the good doctrine which you have closely followed up to now”** (1 Tim. 4:6b, literal translation).

He warned him not to **“give heed to fables and endless genealogies”** (1 Tim. 1:4).

While a pastor must know what the enemy is teaching, **he must not be influenced by it.** A chemist may handle and study poisons, but he does not permit them to get into his system.

**The temporary**—“bodily exercise” (vv. 7–8).

Again, **this is an athletic image**. Certainly we ought to care for our bodies, and exercise is a part of that care. Our bodies are God’s temples, to be used for His glory (1 Cor. 6:19–20), and His tools for His service (Rom. 12:1–2).

But bodily exercise benefits us only during this life; godly exercise is profitable now and for eternity. Paul did not ask Timothy to choose between the two; I think **God expects us to practice both**. A healthy body can be used of God, **but we must major on holiness**.



**1 Corinthians 6:19-20** Or do you not know **that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit** within you, whom you have from God? **You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.** So glorify God in your body.

**Romans 12:1-2** I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, **to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,** which is your spiritual worship. **Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,** that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

## **The eternal—“godliness” (vv. 7–12).**

Phillips Brooks said, “The great purpose of life—the shaping of character by truth.” Godly character and conduct are far more important than golf trophies or home-run records, though it is possible for a person to have both. Paul challenged Timothy to be as devoted to godliness as an athlete is to his sport. We are living and laboring for eternity.

Paul used two similar athletic images in writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9:24–27), emphasizing the **disciplines necessary for godly living.**

**1 Corinthians 9:24-27** Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, **but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.** Every athlete **exercises self-control in all things.** They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. **So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control,** lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

As an athlete must control his body and obey the rules, **so a Christian must make his body his servant and not his master.**

When I see high school football squads and baseball teams going through their calisthenics under the hot summer sun, I am reminded that there are spiritual exercises *that I ought to be doing* (Heb. 5:14). **Prayer, meditation, self-examination, fellowship, service, sacrifice, submission to the will of others, witness—**all of these can assist me, **through the Spirit, to become a more godly person.**

**Hebrews 5:8-14** Although he was a son, **he learned obedience through what he suffered.** And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God **a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.** About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become **dull of hearing.** For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, **for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled** in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But **solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.**