

I. Introduction

Some of you have got to be wondering, "What happened to Russ?" Or maybe you're thinking, "I thought the community series was last month." Be patient, Russ will be back and we will return to our wonderful study through Exodus. But for one more week, you have me. And the community series? Well, it's over, but maybe in a sense it's not. First, I hope that the series on community continues to linger in our minds, and as a seed planted in fertile soil, will grow and bear fruit in our midst. And second, this morning as we take time to consider our expansion plans, I hope you are still thinking about community as part of our expansion plans as you walk out this morning.

You know nothing brings a community together like a crisis. Stories of tragedies and loss in small communities across the country seem to fill the evening news. Often, the angle of the story is not just the tragic events, but a related story of how the community has been galvanized to support those whose lives have been turned upside down. Another example of community on the television is seen on one of my favorite shows, Extreme Makeover Home Edition. The show always ends with the family standing behind the bus with thousands of people from the community gathering to show their support. There's something about a big project and helping others that gets our attention and support.

I thought maybe I could title this message, Extreme Makeover – Clearcreek Edition. But it was just too commercial and I really want this message to focus our thoughts on Christ and what God is doing in our expansion plans rather than a cute title. **But make no mistake, the ministry we do here is in a sense a community project.** Yes, this is God's work and Christ is at the center of our community together. But it is through His people and the local Church that he works. And as Chad alluded to last Sunday night, we are to get behind and support ministry as part of our community together.

Lately I've been asking myself, "What is God doing in our midst? How is God shaping and gifting our ministry?" And as we think about our expansion plans, many of you may be asking, "What's happening? What's going on with the plans to expand and extend our educational facilities?" This morning, I don't have all the answers to my questions, but I hope to answer most of yours. I also want to say that although I have the privilege and honor of being the voice this morning, this is not just my message, it is ours as the Elders of Clearcreek Chapel.

This morning we are going to look at some of Paul's instructions to Timothy. Paul was Timothy's mentor and more than that a dear friend. Timothy, though young, was left by Paul to be an Elder in the Ephesian church. Paul's letters to Timothy were meant to help and guide him in leadership. In the passage that we will look at this morning, Paul specifically is giving Timothy instructions on the work and responsibility of training his flock. What we will read is the affectionate counsel and firm instruction of Paul to Timothy to minister the Word to believers at Ephesus.

This morning I also want to take us from Timothy to today. By that I mean that I want us to connect the responsibility that Timothy had to the Ephesian church to that which we as Elders have to the community in Christ that is Clearcreek Chapel. That is the equipping of the saints through the work and responsibility of ministering the Word. As we see Timothy's call to be faithful in putting forth the truth and disciplined in godly living, we connect this with our responsibilities to do the same and minister the Word to this people in this day. And as we hear the call to faithfully minister the Word, my hope is that we connect it with the vision that we have to extend our facility in a way that allows to teach, train, and help those who would both hear and heed.

[Pray]

[Read 1 Timothy 4:6-16]

II. The Work of Training (v. 6-10)

In the first part of our passage this morning, Paul describes the work of training that Timothy is to commit himself to as he leads and shepherds the church at Ephesus. This work of training was needed to oppose those who were teaching doctrinal error and help those who were being drawn away from the truth. The antidote to the poison of error was the hard work of training and the nourishment of the Word. The cure to the infection of legalism and the lies of Gnosticism was knowledge and discipline in the Word. Paul calls Timothy to a work of training in the church not only because of the promise and hope with a view not only for the present, but also with eyes looking along eternal lines to a future life in Glory.

a. Toward Faith and Doctrine (v. 6-7a)

[Read 1 Timothy 4:6-7]

The work of training here is to be toward faith and doctrine. Timothy was to counter error and put right teaching before the church; and in doing so, he would be a good servant of Jesus Christ. Paul's assumption here is that the character and flow of Timothy's life would follow along the course or lines of his training; a training that was based in the firm foundation of words of faith and of right doctrine. And that the essence of Timothy's teaching would flow out of this training.

On the other hand, Timothy was not to have anything to do with irrelevant and silly myths or wives-tales. That is Timothy was not to be given to teaching that did not have their basis in the Word. Such teaching was mad-made and no different than myths or fables. Contrary to the promise and strengthening of the Word, false doctrine and error corrupts the truth and disrupts our growth toward maturity.

At Clearcreek our ministry of the Word must also follow a Biblical course of strong faith and right doctrine. Those who have been given the responsibility to teach must train themselves in faith and doctrine. This is important because the quality and character of our teaching flows out our ability to follow paths of faith and sound doctrine. And a commitment to put forth right teaching here at the Chapel will flow out of our discipline and passion together to share and minister the Word to those who will come and hear.

b. Toward Godliness (v. 7b-9)

[Read 1 Timothy 4:7-9]

As opposed to myths and fables, Paul instructs Timothy to be trained toward godliness. The work of training in the faith and right doctrine has at its aim godly character. This is the work of spiritual exercise. There is a sense here that the work and discipline in the Word will yield a harvest of godliness. We cannot ignore the cause and effect association that training ourselves in faith and doctrine leads to a holiness of life. To think that we can live for God without the power and nourishment of the Word is either arrogance or foolishness.

Paul contrasts this spiritual discipline to the physical discipline required for training the body. Paul's imagery in these verses is clearly drawing upon Timothy's knowledge of Greek athletic training. What today we would call physical fitness. While I'm not sure the phrase "No pain, no gain" fits well here, there is a connection between the sweat and hard work in the Word and value and benefit received. But the contrast is that while physical training has some value in this life, spiritual training for godliness holds a promise and value that lasts for all of eternity.

This truth, Paul says, is worthy of our trust and full acceptance. Why? Because it had impact not only to Timothy but also to those he ministered to. In the same way, our ministry of the Word here at Clearcreek has impact well beyond the walls of this building and its people. The power and message of God's Word extends from the Chapel to other believers and to the lost with an influence and effect that we will not fully know until we are all gathered together in Heaven.

There are is also an interesting parallel here. Physical exercise shapes the body through disciplining the mind to achieve a standard or measure of performance. And all of us who have tried to establish a regimen of physical exercise know the level of commitment it takes to be successful. Similarly, spiritual exercise shapes the soul through a discipline of the mind to achieve the standard and measure of Scripture through a commitment and desire to live in a way that brings God glory. Yes, godliness comes by God's grace, but it is enabled and fueled through the spiritual exercise of fervent prayer, God-centered worship, faithful reading and studying of the Word, true fellowship, and a humble heart. The point is that our lives are to be carefully and thoroughly shaped by the truth of God's Word.

c. Because of Hope (v. 10)

[Read 1 Timothy 4:10]

The work of training is toward faith and doctrine with an aim of godliness that flows out of the hope we have in God. We work hard at the ministry of the Word because of hope. Paul continues the image of an athlete who labors and strains because of the hope of winning the prize. This word picture is not dissimilar to that which Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 9.

I love to watch our boys play soccer. They practice and work hard at developing their skills. They have even turned our back yard into a soccer field. Complete with a muddy patch in front of the goal and a 24 by 8 foot net that mounts to our privacy fence, which is only a partially effective attempt to keep soccer balls from going into the neighbor's yard. At one point, Paul actually bought several cans of white spray paint to create field lines across the entire yard. But why do they practice? Why do they run drills? Why do they play soccer in 90 degree heat with sun beating down on the field? Because of the hope they have of playing well enough as a team to win.

At Clearcreek we strive to provide good teaching that strengthens our faith and is centered in sound doctrine. Russ, myself, the other Elders, adult teachers, youth leaders, and those who teach our young children, labor in a ministry of the Word. We strive hard to get it right so that those who come are well served. But why do we do this? What is the motivation? It is the confident hope that God will use his word to impact others. Verse 10 sets this forth as the hope set on God who is our Savior. I believe our hope then, is in the impact of the Word, to benefit believers and win those who are lost. To this end we will labor and will strain to put forth the Word because we believe in its power to save the lost and to train the righteous. This is the hope that motivates our ministry of teaching the Word.

III. The Responsibility of Training (v. 11-16)

In the last part of this passage, Paul moves from the work of training to the responsibility of training. Here is Paul's wise counsel and instruction for Timothy to aid him in the ministry. The general sense of what Paul is saying is, "Timothy, do the hard work of training as you minister the word; and here are three other things that will help you be a strong leader." These three instructions are given as a command, a concern, and a caution that guide Timothy in the responsibility of training.

a. A Command (v. 11-12)

[Read 1 Timothy 4:11-12]

Verse 11 begins with a command. Paul first firmly tells Timothy to insist on and teach these things, referring to the truths and sound doctrine that are the hard work of ministering the Word. Paul's exhortation is for Timothy to be strong and not back down on this important task. Given the error and false teaching that had pervaded the church, teaching the Word was to be a priority. This probably meant standing up against those who were false teachers and courageously defending and proclaiming the truth.

Moreover, Timothy was not to let anyone look down on him or the truth he taught because he was young. He was not to be intimidated or fearful, but rather was to be an example in the way that he lived his life. There was to be a strength and maturity that was beyond his age; a strength and maturity that validated his message and ministry.

So it is with Elders and those who teach in the church. We are to be committed to the teaching of the Word. Not exclusively in all we do, but as a priority in what we do. We must insist on teaching the whole counsel of God. We must insist on doing it well that God's people will be spiritually well fed. And as Paul counseled Timothy, there is a responsibility to live a life that is an example in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. This too is the hard work of ministry. To be disciplined in the Word and in living so that we do not disqualify our teaching and so harm the people that we are to help.

b. A Concern (v. 13-14)

[Read 1 Timothy 4:13-14]

Paul continues with a concern. But the concern is prefaced with this exhortation. That Timothy's public ministry is to be undergirded with a passion for the public reading and proclamation of the Word. Paul gives three instructions that give emphasis to the importance of ministering the Word of God. These are first, the public reading of the Word; second, the exhortation from God's Word; and third, the teaching of God's Word. Until Paul returned, Timothy was to devote himself to these three things.

Paul's concern is that Timothy would neglect the gift he had been given. It was a gift that was affirmed by a prophetic message and the laying on of hands of a plurality or council of Elders. Timothy was not to disregard or abandon the spiritual gift he had been given; a gift that was clearly intended to be used to lead and minister to the Church. While the nature of the gift is not indentified, it is possible that when connected to the previous verse, it had to do with ministering the Word. In any case, Timothy was to be faithful in exercising his gift for the sake of the church.

c. A Caution (v. 15-16)

[Read 1 Timothy 4:15-16]

Lastly, Paul issues Timothy a caution. There are two aspects to this caution. But in essence, it is the caution to be conscience of his own example and teaching. First, Timothy is called to give himself or meditate upon those things that he is teaching. He is to be wholly engaged and not live apart from the truths he taught. Furthermore, he was to be well aware that his own progress was being observed by others. Therefore, he was to be devoted and dedicated to the truth and to sound doctrine in a way that would profit or benefit others. The goal of his devotion was not to be self-serving, but others-serving.

Paul concludes with the second aspect of this caution. He was to keep a close watch on his life and teaching. Timothy was to recognize that his personal life was connected to his public teaching and ministry. It was not enough just to teach well. He had to live well; in a way that was devoted to the Word and right living. This he was to persist in, and in doing so would accomplish the work of ministry. In remaining faithful in life and teaching he would encourage and strengthen believers and would offer saving hope to those who were seeking.

This is a tremendous challenge to those who are Elders and to those who would seek to be. The call to godly character and teaching is sobering. We must be committed to the ministering the Word to this community so that they may hear and learn the truth. We must be committed to training up teachers and providing opportunities to learn as our facilities allow. And we must be committed to being an example before you, that our work may benefit all who see the character of our lives. Are we as Elders perfect? I hope that you don't believe that. We fail God. We fail each other. And at times we fail you. But each of us is committed to maintaining the quality and character of our lives according to the qualifications of scripture so that our work in the Chapel will not be hindered. And we will firmly remain committed to the reading, preaching, and teaching of God's Word in ways that bring honor and glory to His Name.

IV. Our Vision For Training

So out of this passage, I want to connect our commitment to the ministry of the Word to our desire to expand this facility in ways that would allow us to provide greater opportunities to put it before others. Our desire is to see this ministry grow in both maturity and in numbers. It is our desire to be able to provide teaching that is broader and deeper to those within the Clearcreek family and also to those outside our local gathering. Our expansion is not a new building for our own sake. It is expansion with an eye on ministry and not neglecting the gifts and strengths that God has given this church.

Clearcreek has a heritage of strong Biblical teaching and a commitment to right and holy living. But as Jesus said to Peter, *"Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more."* So out of our vision and commitment to training and ministering the Word and our desire to use all the gifts and strengths God has given, we desire to expand this facility. In doing so, we believe that we can provide a greater level of education and ministry that will grow and mature those in our community, provide expanded facilities to train and disciple our youth, and provide many other opportunities for kingdom ministry here at Clearcreek Chapel.

[Slides]

V. Conclusion

[Concluding Slide]

[Pray]