

Thursday

A Disciplined Disciple

Today's Scripture 1 Timothy 4:7-16

Despite Peter's description of the church as a "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9), I suppose one of the more frustrating things in church leadership is to get an entire congregation to see themselves as ministers. The word "servant," however, seems to be more easily accepted as applied to every Christian. Throughout the New Testament, God's people are called to serve each other (Galatians 5:13) and to do so with a passionate spirit as they first serve the Lord (Romans 12:11).

As Paul writes to the younger servant, Timothy, he reminded him of the importance of two key ingredients in a fulfilling and effective ministry. The first ingredient, discussed in verses 7-12, is the importance of discipline. Paul urges a disciplined discipleship, mentioning at least three things. First, an effective disciple is careful to what takes his attention (vs. 7). There are so many things competing for our attention, and the effective servant sets his mind on things that "train for godliness." Paul then urges that he be disciplined toward long-term thinking (vs. 8-11). No doubt God's history will record far too many that started well in faith but were distracted over time by "here and now" thinking. Paul's third encouragement of discipline spoke to Timothy's example. He reminds the reader of the power and endurance of example, even from a younger Christian.

A second focus in discipleship is that of passion. In verses 13-16, Paul urges Timothy to fully "immerse" himself in two specific things. First, he says that effective ministry both starts and stays with scripture (vs. 13). It is the foundation of leading others to the right place. Next, he encourages an immersion in the gifts given to him by God (vs. 14), and being careful in stewardship not to neglect those things. Finally, Paul completes these ideas through the reminder that in the immersion of scripture and focus on the stewardship of his gifts, others are led to salvation.

Today, I will...not be distracted by the temporary, but will focus on my future.