Small Group Discussion + Leader Guide

Sunday - October 18, 2026

Preached By: Matt Alexander

"The Marks of a Faithful Minister"

Message #9
"Set In Order: God's Design for His Church" 1 Timothy Series
1 Timothy 4:11-16

Homiletical Bridge:

CIT: Paul emphasized to Timothy the marks of a faithful minister.

Thesis: We must emphasize the marks of a faithful minister.

Proposition: I want FC to emphasize the marks of a faithful minister.

PQ: What are the marks of a faithful minister?

1. **Prescribes Sound Doctrine** — v. 11
2. **Patterns Holy Living** — v. 12
3. **Progresses in His Gifts —** vv. 13–15
4. **Perseveres in Faithfulness — v. 16**

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed to help your group move beyond information to transformation. Work through the questions at a pace that allows genuine conversation. You do not need to cover every question — let the Spirit lead your discussion.

OPENING QUESTION

Take a few minutes to get the conversation started before diving into the sermon content.

- *Think of someone in your life whose faith you genuinely respect. What is it about the way they live that makes their faith credible to you?*

SERMON OVERVIEW

In 1 Timothy 4:11–16, the apostle Paul gives Timothy — and by extension every generation of the church — a clear picture of what faithful ministry looks like. Pastor Matt identified four marks of a faithful minister:

1. **He Prescribes Sound Doctrine**
2. **He Patterns Holy Living**
3. **He Progresses in His Gifts**
4. **He Perseveres in Faithfulness**

As Pastor Matt noted, Alistair Begg observed that because this letter was read publicly, the congregation was simultaneously learning what they had a legitimate right to expect from their pastor. This means the passage is not only for pastors — it is for every member of the church.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Before discussing, take a moment to review these core truths from the sermon.

- A rightly ordered church requires rightly ordered leadership.
- Biblical authority rests in the Word of God, not in the personality, volume, education, or title of the preacher.
- A pastor's authority is not merely established by what comes out of his mouth — it is reinforced by how he lives his life.
- God's calling is not permission to become lazy. It is motivation to become diligent.

- Faithfulness is measured over time.
- The stakes of faithful ministry are eternal — souls are involved.
- No pastor perfectly fulfills this passage. Jesus Christ alone is the perfect fulfillment of faithful ministry.
- Your hope is not in a faithful pastor. Your hope is in a faithful Savior.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Work through these questions as a group. Feel free to spend more time on the sections most relevant to your group's needs.

SECTION 1: He Prescribes Sound Doctrine

1 Timothy 4:11

Pastor Matt said: "The authority isn't in the personality of the preacher. It isn't in his volume. It isn't in his education. It isn't in his title. The authority is in the Word of God."

1. What is the difference between authoritarian preaching and biblical preaching? Why does that distinction matter for how we receive a sermon?

2. Pastor Matt used the image of an ambassador who rewrites the king's message. In what ways might a preacher be tempted to soften, edit, or add to the message of Scripture? What are the consequences when that happens?

3. Pastor Matt challenged the congregation: "You don't need a preacher who always confirms what you already believe. You need a preacher who opens God's Word and says: 'Here's what it says. Here's what it means. Here's what God calls us to do.'" How do you personally respond when a sermon makes you uncomfortable? What does that response reveal?

4. How can a congregation encourage and support their pastors in preaching the full counsel of Scripture, even when it is difficult to hear?

SECTION 2: He Patterns Holy Living

1 Timothy 4:12

Paul calls Timothy to be an example in five areas: speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.

5. Pastor Matt described the danger of becoming a "spiritual road sign" — always pointing others toward holiness without moving there yourself. Where in your own life is there a gap between what you say you believe and how you actually live?

6. Walk through Paul's five areas of example. Which of these do you find most challenging in your own life right now, and why?

    - **Speech**
    - **Conduct**
    - **Love**
    - **Faith**
    - **Purity**

7. Pastor Matt extended this principle beyond pastors: "Parents — your children need more than instructions about Jesus. They need an example of someone following Jesus." Who in your life is watching you? How does that reality shape the way you live day to day?

8. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:1 that believers should be able to follow him as he follows Christ. Could you honestly say that to someone in your life right now? What would need to change for that to be true?

SECTION 3: He Progresses in His Gifts

1 Timothy 4:13–15

Paul instructs Timothy to devote himself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, and to teaching — and to not neglect the gift God has given him.

9. Pastor Matt said: "A gift from God is not an excuse to stop growing." Where have you been tempted to coast on natural ability or past spiritual experience rather than continuing to grow?

10. Paul says in 1 Peter 4:10 that every believer has received a gift to be used in service to others. What gifts do you believe God has given you? Are you actively developing and using them, or have you allowed them to go neglected?

11. Pastor Matt pointed out that Paul says "so that all may see your progress" — not perfection, but progress. What does healthy spiritual progress look like in your own life right now? What evidence of growth could someone close to you point to?

12. What practical habits or disciplines help you continue growing in your faith and in the gifts God has given you? What habits do you need to develop?

SECTION 4: He Perseveres in Faithfulness

1 Timothy 4:16

Paul charges Timothy to keep a close watch on both his life and his doctrine, and to persist.

13. Paul identifies two things Timothy must guard: his life and his doctrine. Why is it dangerous to guard one without the other? Can you think of examples of what happens when a person abandons either?

14. Pastor Matt said: "Ministry isn't a hundred-yard dash. It's a marathon." Where in your faith or spiritual responsibilities are you tempted to sprint for a season and then quit, rather than persevere over the long haul?

15. Pastor Matt referenced Charles Spurgeon's words: "Keep the word of God, and the word of God will keep you." What does it look like practically to stay close to the Word in a way that guards your soul?

16. Pastor Matt closed by pointing to Jesus as the only one who perfectly fulfilled every mark of a faithful minister. How does the gospel free you from the pressure of performing perfectly, while still motivating you to pursue faithfulness?

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Pastor Matt closed the sermon with this reminder:

"*Your hope isn't in a faithful pastor. Your hope is in a faithful Savior. A pastor can't forgive your sin. A sermon can't save you. Church membership can't reconcile you to God. Jesus saves.*"

Take a moment as a group to reflect on these questions:

- Are you resting in what Christ has done, or are you depending on your own spiritual performance?
- Is there anyone in your group who has not yet trusted Christ? Create space for that conversation.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose one or two of these to commit to before your group meets again.

For Every Believer:

- Identify one area of your life where there is a gap between your public faith and your private life. Confess it to God and to a trusted person in your group, and take one concrete step toward closing that gap this week.
- Identify a spiritual gift God has given you that you have been neglecting. Make a specific plan to develop or use it in the next thirty days.
- Evaluate your spiritual growth honestly. Are you further along in your faith than you were one year ago? If not, identify one discipline — Bible reading, prayer, community, service — to intentionally pursue.

For the Congregation:

- Commit to praying specifically for your pastors this week — not just for good sermons, but for their marriages, their private lives, their doctrinal faithfulness, and their endurance.
- Write a note or send a message of encouragement to a pastor, elder, deacon, or ministry leader at Fusion Church this week.

For Parents and Leaders:

- Ask yourself honestly: Is my life one that the people I lead could follow toward Christ? Identify one specific change you will make in your home or leadership context this week.

CLOSING PRAYER PROMPTS

Close your time together in prayer. Use these prompts to guide your group.

- Thank God for the gift of faithful preaching and the authority of His Word.
- Confess areas where your life has not matched what you believe.
- Ask God to develop the gifts He has placed in each member of your group.
- Pray specifically for your pastors by name — for their faithfulness, their families, and their endurance.
- Ask God for the grace to persevere in faith for the long haul.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

1 Timothy 4:16 — Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.