

1 Timothy 6:11-16 "How to Identify a Real Man of God"***

Proposition: In 1 Timothy 6:11-16, God's Word offers us two identifying marks of a real man of God.

- I. A real man of God lives in light of God's *truth* (11-12).
 - A. Because of God's Word, he *flees* (11a).
 - B. Because of God's Word, he *follows* (11b).
 - C. Because of God's Word, he *fights* (12a).
 - 1. It's hard.
 - 2. It's good.
 - 3. It involves *the* faith.
 - D. Because of God's Word, he *fortifies* (12b).
 - 1. He remembers the call God made to him.
 - 2. He remembers the promise he made to God.
- II. A real man of God lives in light of God's *presence* (13-16).
 - A. He's gripped by where God is (13a).
 - B. He's gripped by what God does (13b).
 - C. He's gripped by what God will do (14-15a).
 - D. He's gripped by what God is like (15b-16).

Implication: Are you a man of God?

- 1. Is God's Word real in my life?
- 2. Is God real in my life?

When I was a teenager our youth group visited a rest home at Halloween one year. We dressed up in costumes and headed off to encourage the residents. I decided to dress up as an old man--I wore an old hat of my grandfather's and a fake beard. Right before we left, one of the residents came up to me--remember, I'm only sixteen years old or so--and asked me, "How long have you lived here? I haven't seen you before." She thought I was really an old man.

It's not always easy to tell the *real thing*, is it? We can appear to be something that we're not. Which brings me to a question.

How do you identify a man of God? I'm talking about the *real thing*. It's possible to be a church goer and not be a man of God. It's possible to see someone carry their Bible to church week after week and not be a man of God. We know that.

So how do you spot a person who's truly pleasing to the Lord? How can you tell if *you* are that kind of a person? God gives us the answer in 1 Timothy 6. In 1 Timothy 6:11-16, the Scriptures offer us two identifying marks of a real man of God.

I. A real man of God lives in light of God's *truth* (11-12).

We're nearing the end of 1 Timothy (next week, as the Lord wills, we will finish our six month journey). It's a very practical letter that addresses church life. In it we discover how to be a church that pleases God (3:15).

There's one issue that churches must understand if they are to be strong. It's the issue that Paul addresses at the beginning (1:3), the middle (4:1-5), and at the end of his letter (6:3-10). It's the ever present threat of *false teaching*.

A sure way to kill a church is to wink at teaching that is not scriptural. What kind of teacher would abandon God's Word in favor of man-crafted ideas? That was the subject we learned about in the past two weeks as we explored verses 3-10.

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But today we turn our attention to the real thing. What kind of person pleases God? What's true of a real man of God? Two marks, here's the first--A real man of God lives in light of God's truth.

Listen to verses 11-12, "But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

What is it that drives a real man of God? As we unpack verses 11-12, we'll discover the answer. Mark #1 is *God's truth*. God's Word governs his life--so much so that you'll see it exhibited in four actions. In the text, Paul mentions four imperatives in verses 11-12--flee, pursue, fight, and take hold. Let's look at them one at a time.

A. Because of God's Word, he flees (11a). Paul begins verse 11, "But you, man of God." These are personal words from the apostle to his junior associate, Timothy. "But you," Timothy. "Unlike the false teachers who chose gold over God, you be different Timothy. Remember that you are a man of God."

The phrase "man of God" is loaded with significance. In the Old Testament, the title was given to Moses (Deut. 33:1) and Samuel (1 Sam. 9:6). It depicted the messenger that came to Eli (1 Sam. 2:27), and to Shemaiah, God's messenger to Rehoboam (1 Kgs. 12:22). In addition, such great men as Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:18, 24), Elisha (2 Kgs. 4:7), and David (Neh. 12:24, 36) were called men of God. Peter used the plural "men of God" to refer to the men who wrote the Old Testament Scriptures.

This is a title of honor. It refers especially to an individual who represents God by proclaiming His Word (MacArthur, 260).

When Paul called Timothy a "man of God," he was reminding him of his high calling. "Timothy, you are God's man! You belong to God. But you're not alone. You are in a line of many other people that God has used to proclaim His Word to the world."

But Timothy's not the only man of God. In this age, *every believer* is in a sense called to be a "man of God." Why? Because every believer possesses the Spirit of God and the Word of God. The only other appearance of this phrase in the NT explains (2 Tim. 3:16-17): "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching...so that the *man of God* may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

If you are a Christian, this applies to you. You have a high calling. You have the privilege of representing God in this world by proclaiming His Word. Last week, John shared the Word of God with a friend at work. He functioned as a "man of God." A man of God is someone who lives in light of God's truth.

In practical terms, what must a man of God do anyway? In Paul's charge to Timothy in verse 11, we find the first activity. Because of God's Word, he *flees*.

Yes, there are times when running is a sign of cowardice. But not always, as Warren Wiersbe observes (235), "There are other times when fleeing is a mark of wisdom and a means of victory. Joseph fled when he was tempted by his master's wife (Gen. 39:12), and David fled when King Saul tried to kill him (1 Sam. 19:10)."

The word "flee" obviously doesn't refer to literal running, but carries of the sense of *separating oneself*. From what? The text reads, "Flee from *all this* [KJV "Flee these things"]." What things? The things false teachers do. They don't agree to sound teaching (3). They'd rather argue than help people grow (4). Their teaching promotes friction between people (5). They think that godliness is a means to getting something for self (5). They love money, and their pursuit of money is more important to them than the truths of the faith (10).

That's what false teachers do. But not a man of God. Timothy was to separate himself from the sins of the false teachers. And so are we. A man of God will flee all this.

Think carefully about this statement (Wiersbe, 236): "Not all unity is good, and not all division is bad. There are times when a servant of God should take a stand against false doctrine and godless practices, and separate himself from them." But that's not all he does.

B. Because of God's Word, he follows (11b). He follows after some things. Verse 11 continues, "Flee from all this and pursue [KJV "follow after"] righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness." Fleeing is only part of what a man of God does. He follows, too. In Ephesians 4 terminology, he "puts off" and he "puts on."

He runs from the love of money, but he runs toward spiritual treasure. The verb is intense. In some texts, the Greek *dioke* is actually translated "persecute." What does a persecutor do? He "hunts down" fugitives, doesn't he? With great zeal, he searches for, pursues, and tries to bring under his control certain people.

That's what a man of God does. But he doesn't hunt for people. What does he pursue? Christlikeness. Paul lists six virtues, six qualities that Christ modeled.

Pursue *righteousness*. In Romans, "righteousness" refers to a right legal standing with God--justification. That's not what Paul's talking about here. We don't "pursue" justification. We receive it. God gives us the righteousness of Christ if we repent and believe in Him. Here "righteousness" is used in the sense of "doing right" towards God and man. Which is what the false teachers weren't pursuing.

Next, follow after *godliness*. Righteousness deals with outward behavior, while godliness addresses attitudes and motives (MacArthur). Right behavior must flow from right motive. Godliness means we live with a God-focus. God's real in our lives.

Right there's where a real man of God starts. He majors on the major issues. He doesn't just preach to others. He strives to be a man who first exhibits righteousness and godliness in his own life.

The Puritan John Flavel rightly observed, "Brethren, it is easier to declaim against a thousand sins of others, than to mortify one sin in ourselves."

The 19th century English preacher Charles Bridges wrote: "For if we should study the Bible more as Ministers than as Christians--more to find matter for the instruction of our people, than food for the nourishment of our own souls, we neglect then to place ourselves at the feet of our Divine Teacher, our communion with Him is cut off, and we become mere formalists in our sacred profession."

A man of God strives to apply the Word to his own life before he gives it to others. Is that true of you?

The list continues. He pursues *faith* [or faithfulness]. His aim is to trust God and be loyal to Him in everything. Then *love*--agape love. He strives to do what's right towards God and others. *Endurance*--since it's not easy to be a man of God. Not everyone pats you on the back. They might stab you in the back, so follow after endurance and patience. And *gentleness* [meekness, KJV]. Barclay says this Greek word *paupatheia* is really untranslatable. "It describes the spirit which never blazes into anger for its own wrongs but can be devastatingly angry for the wrongs of others. It describes the spirit which knows how to forgive and yet knows how to wage the battle of righteousness. It describes the spirit which walks at once in humility and yet in pride of its high calling from God (135)."

How can you spot a true man of God? Look for a person who's pursuing these qualities. By the way, four of the six virtues either appear in the list or are synonymous with terms in the list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. What does that say? The Holy Spirit must produce these in us--we can't in our own effort. But He does it through our effort. What God commands, He enables.

What's more, Jesus is the perfect model of these six qualities. The goal really is to be *like Him*. The more I grow in Christlikeness the more I'll reflect these traits.

C. Because of God's Word, he *fights* (12a). "Fight the good fight of the faith." What's true of the fight we're in?

1. *It's hard.* The Greek verb is *agonizou* from which we get our English word "agony." Is it easy to be a man of God? No way. It takes effort to live a victorious Christian life--not to become a Christian, but to grow as a Christian. It's hard.

2. *It's good.* Paul told Timothy to fight the "good" fight. Which implies there's a what? A not-so-good fight. Remember, verse 4 indicates that false teachers are fighters, too. They love to stir up a battle. They don't mind a fight. But it's not the *good* fight.

We're in a good fight. We're on the front lines proclaiming the Word of God to people, rescuing them from the chains of the enemy. That's a good fight.

3. *It involves the faith.* The NIV renders a better translation of the Greek text. What we're to fight for is "the faith." The issue here isn't *our* faith--our personal trust in Jesus--but *the faith*--a term which refers to the body of Christian truth. It's "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3)." In essence, it's the Word of God.

A man of God fights for *the faith*--to protect it and to proclaim it.

When it comes to the *fight*, we would do well to keep Nehemiah before us as our example. Nehemiah exhibited balance. His approach was to have a trowel in one hand for building and a sword in the other hand for battling (Neh. 4:17; Wiersbe, 236). We need *both* the trowel and the sword.

Some teachers spend so much time fighting the enemy that they fail to build up their people--that's not good. But some teachers refuse to guard the truth by taking a stand against the enemy--that's not good either.

D. Because of God's Word, he *fortifies* (12b). Verse 12 presents a fourth imperative, "Take hold of [lay hold on, KJV] the eternal life." A man of God gives attention to eternal life. He knows that eternal life is not just something for *later*, but for *now*. Yes, it will be a future blessing, but it's also a present reality. Paul wanted Timothy to get a grip on the certainty of eternal life.

How? How does a man of God fortify himself with the reality of eternal life? Verse 12 shows how--by remembering two things.

1. *He remembers the call God made to him.* "Take hold the eternal life to which you were called." Notice the passive. God did the calling. "Called" refers to the effectual, sovereign call of God to salvation. Timothy, remember when God called you and saved you? (see 2 Thes. 2:13-14)

Do you remember? I was eleven when the Spirit of God called me. He used His Word to get my attention, and show me my desperate need for Christ. Timothy was to remember the call God made to him. In addition, he was to remember...

2. *He remembers the promise he made to God.* "When you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

What confession? The one Timothy made at his baptism. The New Testament knows nothing of a "privatized faith," the "all that matters is me and God" approach to the Christian life. If you've believed in Christ, you need to let the world know. Baptism is where to begin. Baptism is the God-ordained way of making a public confession of your allegiance to Christ.

Romans 10:9 states, "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

In Paul's day, you paid a great price to be a Christian. You could lose your life--literally. And many Christians did. So before they were baptized, they counted the cost.

They knew that baptism was a public confession. At baptism, a person in essence said, "I belong to Jesus Christ. He is my Savior and Lord. I pledge my life to Him."

Have you ever done that? If you are a believer in Christ, you need to be baptized. You need to make a public confession--which is what baptism is--that Christ is your Lord and Savior.

Do you see the divine/human cooperative in verse 12? God calls us--we could never be saved if He didn't. But we must confess Christ. And we must remember both of these. Remember the call God extended to you, and remember the promise you made to Him. As you do, you will fortify your soul as a man of God, and take hold of eternal life.

If you want to spot a true man of God, here's the first identification mark. Look for a person who lives in light of God's truth--a person who because of God's Word flees, follows, fights, and fortifies. Again, is that true of your life? Are you living in light of God's truth?

A second identification mark...

II. A real man of God lives in light of God's *presence* (13-16).

In verses 13-16 Paul shifts his focus from the truth of God to the presence of God. Both are real in the life of a man of God. The theme of this section is *God*. A man of God is a person whose life revolves around God. God's not just on the edges, not just on Sunday, but at the center, from Sunday to Sunday.

In 1948 A. W. Tozer wrote the book that has become a classic, *The Pursuit of God*. In it Tozer writes: "To most people God is an inference, not a reality. He is a deduction from evidence which they consider adequate; but He remains personally unknown to the individual. 'He must be there,' they say, 'therefore we believe He is.' Others do not go even so far as this; they know of Him only by hearsay. They have never bothered to think the matter out for themselves, but have heard about Him from others, and have put belief in Him into the back of their minds along with the various odds and ends that make up their total creed. To many others God is but an ideal, another name for goodness, or beauty, or truth; or He is law, or life, or the creative impulse back of the phenomena of existence.

"These notions about God are many and varied, but they who hold them have one thing in common: they do not know God in personal experience (49-50)."

Is the presence of God real in your life? For the man of God, it is. The sad truth is that the American church is full of professing Christians in whose life God is not real. They claim to be Christians, but they're not fleeing, following, fighting, and fortifying. They're "chameleon" Christians. They have just enough "God" to be dangerous.

Patrick Morley calls them "cultural" Christians. And there are a lot of them. You may be one. "How can I tell?" you ask. Or to turn the question around, "How can I tell if I'm truly living in light of God's presence?" Here's the answer--in verses 13-16. A person who's living in light of God's presence is gripped by four realities.

A. He's gripped by where God is (13a). Paul begins his charge in verse 13 with this statement, "*In the sight of God...I charge you.*" The charge will actually follow in verse 14: "Keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul exhorted Timothy to keep this command. What command? Possibly the ones just given in verses 11-12: flee, follow, fight, and fortify. But Paul doesn't say to keep these *commands*. In fact, a literal translation would be, "Keep [or guard] *the* command."

What's *the* command? I think it's a reference to the entire revealed Word of God (as MacArthur proposes, 266). Commentator J. N. D. Kelly suggests "the commandment" refers to "the whole law of Christ, the rule of faith and life enjoined by the gospel, to which

Timothy has pledged himself at his baptism and of which as an apostolic leader he is a trustee (144)."

Lieutenant Timothy had a job to do. General Paul charged him to keep the command, to guard the Word of God. How do you guard the God's message? By proclaiming it and by protecting it, right? Over and over in the pastoral epistles Paul charged Timothy to guard the truth entrusted to him (1 Tim. 1:18-19; 4:6, 16; 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:13-14; 2:15-18).

Is it easy to do that? No. Satan doesn't like it. The world doesn't like it either. So what will motivate a person to do what Satan despises and the world hates? Here's the answer. It's a conviction of the presence of God. "*In the sight of God* I give you this charge." A man of God is gripped by where God is. We exist in His sight. Reality #2...

B. He's gripped by what God does (13b). "In the sight of God, who gives life to everything." What's true of God? He gives life to everything. He's the Creator. He's also the Preserver of life. The bottom line is that He's in charge of life.

How would that encourage a man of God to guard the command? Listen to MacArthur's observation (266): "The preacher should not be concerned about the price of his faithful proclamation because the Lord will sustain him until he has finished his work. Even if the man of God is killed for his faithfulness to the Lord, God has the power and will resurrect him in glory."

Which is what happened to Jesus, isn't it? Verse 13 continues, "In the sight of God...and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you."

Do you remember what happened when Jesus was on trial before the Romans? Pilate asked Him (Matt. 27:11), "Are You the King of the Jews?" How did Jesus respond? Fearlessly and confidently He replied, "It is as you say." Our Lord boldly stood His ground and spoke the truth. And by His help, a man of God will do the same.

Do you stand up for Jesus Christ where you work? Do you speak up for Him when the Spirit opens a door with your neighbors? If you struggle--and we all do--ask God to make His presence more real to you. A man of God is gripped by where God is and by what God does. A third reality...

C. He's gripped by what God will do (14-15a). What will He do? We need not wonder for He tells us. "Keep the command without spot or blame until the *appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ* which God will bring about in his own time."

Beloved, Jesus will come again. And the fact of His appearing is a great incentive for obedient service to Him now. If you're living in light of God's presence, you'll be gripped by what God will do.

The day is coming when the Father will reveal His Son to the world. The book of Revelation gives a graphic presentation of what this *revealing* will be like. And know this. When He appears in that day, it will not be as a baby in a manger, but as a Victorious King!

You see, the question for the man of God is not, "Will what I'm doing now pass the judgment of men?" But rather, "Will what I'm doing pass the judgment of God?"

Are you gripped by what God's going to do? You say, "When will it happen?" The text says that God will bring it about "in His own time." He alone knows so there's no value in speculating. In this text, Paul spends more time focusing on *Who* rather than *when*--which brings us to the fourth reality.

D. He's gripped by what God is like (15b-16). "God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen."

What's true of God? What's He like? We need this teaching, and here's why. There's lots of interest in "spiritual things" these days. Lots of people seem to be talking about

God. They talk about wanting to experience God. But you can't experience the Living God until you *know Him*.

Paul gives us seven characteristics of the True God right here. If you don't believe in this God, you may be religious, but you've settled for a deficient substitute, an idol.

What's true of God? One, He's the *blessed and only Ruler*. He's the Sovereign One. He alone rules the universe. There is no rival to Him.

Two, He's the *King of kings*, and three, He's the *Lord of lords*. A literal rendering would be, "He is the King of those kinging and the Lord of those lording."

Four, He *alone is immortal*. He's not one of us contrary to New Age teaching. He's in a class all by Himself. The Greek term for "immortal" is *athanasia* which means "deathless." He's incapable of dying. He's not restricted by time and space.

Five, He *lives in unapproachable light*. Six, *no one has ever seen Him*. And seven, *no one can see Him*. Let that sink in. God lives in unapproachable light. That's why the gospel is such good news.

Beloved, it's impossible for a sinful human to approach a holy God. He who exists in unapproachable light cannot tolerate sin-stained beings in His presence. We would be shattered by the sheer brilliance of His majestic glory.

How then can we approach God? It's only through Jesus Christ. He is the Light of the world. Through Him we may enter the holy presence of the God who lives in unapproachable light.

Why did He die on the cross anyway? To remove the blemishes of our sin. To make us clean! To rescue us from the kingdom of darkness so we could enter the kingdom of light!

Colossians 1:12-14 explains: "Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the *kingdom of light*. For he has rescued us from the *dominion of darkness* and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

John 1:18 says that no one has seen God at any time. That refers to seeing God in His essence. But we can see manifestations of this essence. Jesus said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father (John 14:9)."

Beloved, you cannot meander into the presence of the unapproachable God of light. You must be escorted into His presence. And there's only one escort who qualifies.

And if you know Him, if you've truly been gripped by what God is like, you'll say with Paul, "To Him be honor and might forever. Amen."

Implication: Are you a man of God?

Suppose you were arrested. And suppose you were brought into the courtroom and the charge was read, "This person is a man of God!" And then suppose the evidence was examined. Here's the question: Would there be enough evidence to convict you?

In response to the Word of God today, would you ask yourself two questions:

1. *Is God's Word real in my life?* Is it? What needs to change so it's more real? But the bottom line is the second question.

2. *Is God real in my life?* What kept Paul going in the rough times? It was *God*. We are called to be men and women of God. Are you living in light of your call?