

**A Sacred Trust**  
**2 Timothy**  
**August 2, 2015**  
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Well it is our joy tonight — the elders and I — to, again, as we had the privilege of doing last Sunday night, ordain one of the men God has raised up in this church to the gospel ministry. And that's Dusty Burris. We're so grateful for Dusty and Rebecca, for their family. I remember when the Lord brought them to us, and immediately their hearts resonated with the ministry here, and in God's time the elders asked Dusty to come on staff, and he served faithfully; he has been serving as a pastor, doing the work of a pastor, and tonight it is our joy to officially ordain him in the tradition of the church and of the teaching of the Scripture.

With that in mind, I want us tonight to reflect on one of the church's chief duties, and one of his chief duties as of tonight. Let me take you back to the ministry of the Apostle Paul and, specifically, to his interaction with his young son in the faith, Timothy. If you've read the book of Acts, you know it ends with Paul in prison. That is his first Roman imprisonment. Shortly after, he was released from the two years of imprisonment that he endured there in Rome at the end of the book of Acts. And the two years beyond, the Apostle Paul left, and he traveled to Ephesus—a church that he had been intimately involved in planting and ministering in for almost three years during one of his missionary journeys. He returned to Ephesus, and he returned there with Timothy, his son in the faith. Timothy had come to faith during Paul's first missionary journey and became his “often” companion from that time forward.

When Paul came to Ephesus after he was released from his imprisonment, he decided that the church there in Ephesus needed the constant influence of his teaching and his ministry. But it was impossible for Paul to stay. He had other places he needed to go and other churches he needed to strengthen. And so what he decided to do in his stead was to leave his best man there—his best substitute, Timothy. Paul told the Philippians he had nobody else like Timothy. In Philippians 2:19-20, he says, “...I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one *else* of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.” It's a remarkable testimony.

So Paul leaves Timothy in the beloved city of Ephesus with that church that he cared so much for, and Paul went on to Macedonia, hoping to return soon to Ephesus. But he was delayed. And so from Macedonia, Paul wrote Timothy the letter that we call 1 Timothy. And in the third chapter of 1 Timothy, Paul explains why he wrote that letter to his young son in the faith, Timothy. You'll notice 1 Timothy 3:15. At the end of that verse, Paul makes a remarkable statement about the church. Notice what he says. The church is “the pillar and support of the

truth." By *the truth*, of course, he means the entire content of the Christian faith, or we could say the Scripture itself.

Notice how he describes the relationship that the church has to the truth. He describes it in two architectural images or terms. First of all, it is the *pillar*. That is, the church is the *column* that holds up or supports the truth just as a column holds the roof of a building. Secondly, he says the church is the *support* of the truth. That has the idea of a firm base for the truth. Now don't misunderstand: the church doesn't create the truth. It doesn't add to the truth. Truth exists completely separate from the church. However, the church is responsible to hold up or to support the truth.

In light of that duty of the church, it's not surprising that Paul ends his first letter to Timothy by making the truth part of the pastor's job description. Look at 1 Timothy 6:20. "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you..." As we'll see in just a few moments, that's a very technical expression for the deposit of truth that Paul had made with Timothy.

Dusty, we're here tonight to formally ordain you to the gospel ministry. As a pastor, you already know and you will know even more as the years unfold, the many responsibilities, the varied responsibilities that come with that duty. But there is without question one chief responsibility, one chief duty that you have, and that is to be a steward of the truth. That is the treasure. That is the deposit that has been given to the church.

There are many passages which talk about the stewardship that we have with the truth, but I think the most poignant of them and the most compelling is found in Paul's second letter to Timothy. You remember that Paul writes this letter from a Roman prison, his second Roman imprisonment. This time, he won't leave alive. He writes shortly before his death, which comes in the year 67 A.D. This was in fact the last inspired letter the Apostle Paul would ever write. Timothy was still pastoring in Ephesus, where Paul had left him. Paul needed Timothy to come to visit him in Rome because Paul knew his life was very short. But Paul also knew as he wrote this letter that Timothy needed encouragement. With Paul, his mentor's, arrest and imprisonment, and almost certain execution, along with the troubles that Timothy was facing in Ephesus that are unfolded in these epistles, Timothy—Paul knew—had lost some of his heart for ministry. He lost some of his initial enthusiasm, some of the energy that had marked his early years.

And so for those reasons, Paul writes 2 Timothy. Now, the structure of the letter is pretty simple, actually. After an initial greeting, Paul begins in verse 6 of chapter 1 issuing a series of instructions to Timothy. Notice in verse 6 he tells him, I want you to kindle afresh your spiritual gifting and your ministry calling. You've lost the energy of that. I want you to fan that into flame again. And then in verse 8, he tells him, 'I don't want you to be ashamed. Don't be

ashamed of the Lord and testifying of him, and don't be ashamed of me, his prisoner. Instead, commit yourself to share in the same kind of suffering that I'm facing.'

But tonight, I want us to move beyond those sections to concentrate on the imperatives that Paul gives to Timothy regarding what he is to do with the truth, the sacred trust that is the Scripture. Let me read for us the passage I want to look at tonight. I'll begin in 2 Timothy 1:13.

Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to *you*. You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me — the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day — and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus. You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

As Paul's life and ministry comes to a close, he underscores for Timothy—his son in the faith—what matters the most to him. Paul says, 'Timothy, I have given you sacred trust.'

Dusty, there's nothing more important I can remind you of tonight on this solemn occasion of your ordination than of this stewardship that is passed to each of us from the godly men who have gone before us.

In the verses that we just read together, there are four clear directives regarding this stewardship of the truth. Let's look at those directives together. First of all, Paul says we are to teach the truth. Look at verse 13. "Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me..." Do you notice how Paul refers to truth in this verse? He calls it "sound words." Literally, the Greek word is *healthy*. Healthy words. In other words, words that produce spiritual health. This is in contrast to bad teaching or false teaching, which make the Christian sick and weak, destroy his spiritual health. In fact, Paul makes this contract back in 1 Timothy 6:4 when he's talking about false teaching. He says the false teacher — you'll notice the New American Standard says "has a morbid interest in controversial questions," but look at the marginal note there. It's *he is sick about* — is sick about this false teaching. It's produced spiritual illness in his life, these other kinds of teaching.

In 2 Timothy 2:16, he warns Timothy, "avoid worldly *and* empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness," for their talk—the talk of these false teachers—"will spread like gangrene." False teaching is like a deadly disease that just kills what it comes in contact with. In

contrast, in 2 Timothy 1, Paul says to Timothy, ‘Remain committed to healthy words, to words that will produce spiritual health.’ Notice specifically, Paul commands Timothy to retain the standard of sound words. Literally, he says ‘Be continually having or holding to the standard of sound words.’ He’s talking about his teaching. Paul is telling Timothy that as the regular practice of his ministry, he is to follow the practice or the pattern that he witnessed firsthand in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. Paul is essentially saying, ‘Timothy, teach the word like I did. Follow the model, the pattern, that I have set.’ And the reason for this is he tells Timothy later, ‘Look, Timothy, there are other models and patterns for ministry out there’.

And that’s still true today. Look over in 2 Timothy 4:3, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine," when people who attach themselves to the Christian church won't want the scriptures taught, but instead they'll want "to have their ears tickled." They'll want to hear something that pleases them, that's about their needs and their lives. "And they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and turn away their ears from the truth," what's been delivered here in the Scripture. And they'll be happy with myths — something just made up, something fabricated by the teacher. So there are other models out there; there were other models out there in the first century, but Paul says ‘Timothy, I want you to retain the standard of sound words. I want you to be committed to the pattern you saw in me of teaching sound, or healthy, doctrine.’

Now what's the source of these health-giving words, these sound words, words that promote spiritual health? Notice what he says in verse 13: "... sound words which you have heard from me." Timothy is not only to copy Paul's model of teaching the scripture faithfully, but he's also to get his content solely from the apostle. Think about this for a moment. What Paul is saying to Timothy is the only words Timothy could teach that would produce spiritual health in his hearers were the ones that he had received from the apostle.

The same is true for us today. The only health-giving words that can be spoken are words that come directly from this book. Everything else produces some level of spiritual illness and sickness. Sadly, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ is desperately sick, and tragically there's primarily one reason for it—the leaders of the church have substituted their words for God's Words, their ideas in place of the apostle's doctrine, their stories in place of the Scripture, their jokes in place of Jesus, their cleverness in the place of God's wisdom, their mind in exchange for the mind of Christ found in the Scripture.

Dusty, it's so important for you to understand, as I know you already embrace, and I just confirm it to you tonight: the only words that you can ever speak that will minister spiritual health to the people who listen to you are the words that come from this book. Your own words will do nothing.

Again and again in 1 and 2 Timothy, Paul reminds his son in the faith that teaching the truth is the core of his duty as a shepherd. Again and again. Let me just show you a couple of examples. Go back to 1 Timothy 1:3. He says, ‘When I left you in Ephesus and left you there, I left you so that you may instruct. Timothy, your job is about teaching.’ Chapter 3 verse 2, ‘Elders are to be able to teach’. Chapter 4 verse 6, ‘I want you to point these things out to the brethren.’ Verse 11 of that same chapter: “Prescribe and teach these things.” Verse 13: “Until I come,” Timothy, I want you to “give attention to the *public* reading of *Scripture*,” and then exhorting and teaching from that Scripture. Don't neglect the spiritual gift within you, but instead,’ verse 15, ‘I want you to “take pains with these things.” What things? The public reading of scripture, exhortation, teaching. Be absorbed in them so that your progress will be evident to all. Teachers never arrive. My prayer is that from month-to-month and year-to-year you can see progress in my teaching. That's what Paul wanted us all to manifest.

‘Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching.’ This is what we're called to do. Verse 7 of chapter 5: ‘Prescribe these things; teach these things with authority.’ Verse 17: ‘The elders who rule well are to be paid, “especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.” Chapter 6 verse 17: “instruct those who are rich”, teach them.’ And the same pattern follows in 2 Timothy as well, but look at chapter 4, that famous text, verse 1: “I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, [and] by His appearing and His kingdom...”—that is a solemn precursor to this charge—“...preach the word.” Preach the Word! Preach God's truth. Do it when it's popular, in season, and do it when it's not popular, out of season. As you know, right now, it is seriously out of season, and Paul says it doesn't matter. Timothy, just keep doing it.

The chief duty of shepherds is to feed their sheep, and we're to feed the sheep with the Scripture. By the way, this is the primary way that as pastors we can show our love to Jesus Christ. Three times in John 21, our Lord tells Peter, ‘Peter, if you love me, I want you to feed my sheep. If you love me, feed my sheep. If you love me, feed my sheep.’ The best way that I can demonstrate love for my Lord is to take His word and explain it to you.

This is what we're called to do. If the Apostle Paul were here tonight participating in your ordination, I can guarantee you that he would remind you of your stewardship to the truth, and he would you tell you *teach the truth*.

But there's a second imperative in these verses, and that is *live the truth*. Verse 13 goes on to say, “Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” The first half of verse 13 deals with Timothy's teaching. He is to follow the model of Paul's teaching, and he is to follow the apostle's doctrine as well. But the second half of verse 13 deals not with Timothy's teaching, but rather with his life. As you teach healthy

words, make sure your own spiritual life is healthy as well. Make sure your own life is characterized—notice what he says—by “the faith and love which are in Jesus Christ.”

When Paul says that Timothy is to accomplish his ministry *in faith*, this is what he means. He means, Timothy, you need to believe and be fully convinced yourself of the truth that you teach. You have confidence in the Scripture. Live out your life and ministry in faith. In other words, make sure the truth first impacts your own life before you teach it to others. You need to be nourished by the very same truth that you're teaching others.

Turn back to 1 Timothy 4:6. Paul talks about being a good servant of Jesus Christ, and part of being a good servant of Jesus Christ, notice, is being one who is "...*constantly* nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following."

We're to be nourished by the truth we teach. Tragically, there are way too many preachers who are a lot like hypodermic needles. They deliver the medicine to others, but they remain unaffected by it themselves. That's not the call for pastors. I love the quote by Johann Albrecht Bengel, who said this: "Apply yourself wholly to the text," that's in your study, and then "apply the text wholly to yourself." Apply it. Live it. Paul says "retain the standard of sound words" in faith. Believe what you teach. Let the truth of scripture change you. Be nourished in the truth of Scripture yourself and then he adds, notice, in love. Live a life of faith in God and His Word, and a life of love toward God and others.

Essentially, Paul is just telling Timothy what he told him in his first letter. Go back to 1 Timothy 4:6. He says in verse 7, 'I want you to "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." The word *discipline* is the Greek word from which we get our English word *gymnasium*, γυμνάσιον (*gymnazo*). He says, 'I want you to exercise yourself—not your body—but your spiritual life. I want you to apply yourself to grow in godliness. Use the same discipline to grow in godliness that athletes expend to grow in their physical endurance.' He comes down to 4:16 and says, "Pay close attention", not only to your teaching but also to yourself.' That's what Paul is saying.

If you're going to be a faithful steward of the sacred trust given you tonight, Dusty, you have to teach the truth, but you also have to live the truth so that you don't undermine the truth you teach by what your life is like. That starts, as you know, at home, with the people that know you best. I know that Becky affirms your call to ministry, your qualification for ministry. Our goal as ministers and pastors is to make sure that never changes, that we are as qualified to be ministers at home as we are in the church. Live the truth.

How do we do that? How can we do that consistently? We can't do it in our own strength. No Christian here can. You can't live the Christian life in your own strength. How do you do it? Notice the small phrase at the end of verse 13: "In the faith and love," I love this, "which are

in Christ Jesus." The ability to walk in a life of faith in God's Word and the ability to walk in love toward God and others can only come from the same source our salvation came: from Jesus Christ. Only He can empower us to live the truth. 'Without me,' Jesus says, 'you can do—what?—nothing'. Nothing.

Paul's third imperative comes in verse 14, and it's to guard the truth. "Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to *you*." This is one of my favorite verses in the New Testament because, you see, there are many different images that describe the Scripture, many different pictures of the Scripture. But this verse contains one of the most powerful and beautiful images of Scripture in the entire Bible. Notice that phrase, "The treasure which has been entrusted." In reality, that comes from three Greek words...only three Greek words. And those three Greek words are literally translated as you see it in the NAS marginal note there in verse 14. It's *the good deposit*. Guard the good deposit.

What does that mean? That's a picture that comes from first century life, from the culture in which they lived. Specifically, it comes from the first century banking culture. You see, there weren't banks like you and I know them in the first century. Often, if you owned items of value like coins or family heirlooms of some kind, they would be kept in an inner room in your house, in the very middle of your house because many homes didn't have windows, didn't have doors in the sense that we think of that could be locked and secured, and so you would put your valuables in this inner room. You would lock that inner room, but remember most homes were made out of mud and straw, so it was very easy for a thief to break in and steal, as Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount. And so if you were going to be away for any period of time, you had to think not only "What am I going to do with the dog," but "What am I going to do with the valuables?" What am I going to do with the family treasures, with those things that we own that have immense value? We're not going to carry them with us because, you know, thieves and robbers were everywhere. So we can't do that; so, instead, you would leave those things that were truly your treasures either at the nearby temple—if you were pagan or even the Jerusalem temple in the case of Jews—or you would leave them with a family member, or you would leave them with a close and trusted friend, the idea being they would be much safer in the inner room of a home that was inhabited as opposed to the inner room of one that wasn't. Then that person was responsible to guard what you had entrusted to them and return it to you when you came home.

Now in that culture, if you received that treasure, it was called *the deposit*. And if you receive that deposit, the treasure of your friend or of your family member, you took it upon yourself as a sacred trust to protect it until they returned. I remember there have been several times in my ministry when I've gone to various fields internationally, and the missionaries have asked me—because of the difficulty of getting money transferred into their culture—they've asked me when I've come to bring the maximum allowance that you can take in cash without having to report it,

just under \$10,000. And I remembered getting \$10,000 in cash that didn't belong to me and feeling the weight of the responsibility to make sure that that got to the person to whom it belonged. I can promise you I didn't sleep well with that money. I remember one time I was traveling through the Frankfurt airport, and I had it in one of those money belts that slides down between your shirt and your pants, and the scanner wouldn't let me go through, and the man who was manning the security station insisted that I bring that out and show him what was in it. So, in front of God and everyone including about five thousand people standing around, I'm showing this wad of cash, and just praying, "Lord, when I get to the men's room, don't let anyone mug me."

You feel this great weight. That's the idea behind this word *treasure*. It's the *good deposit*. It's like the church is God's family, and the truth is the family treasure. In one sense, that treasure has been entrusted to us all. Every person here, if you're in Christ, you are responsible to help guard the treasure. In other words, you are to listen to teachers like me, and you are to make sure, like the Bereans, that what we teach lines up with the Scripture. But in this context, it's the special duty of those leaders who've been called to shepherd Christ's church to *guard the good deposit*.

And by the way, the word *guard* is a military word, and so it's like we're to be *sentinels* whose job is to protect the treasure which is the truth. And it's an important job because threats come against the truth all the time. They come from false teachers and false teaching from outside the church, and they come from even within the church—false teaching and apostates from within the church. If I had time, I'd take you through a number of texts in both 1 and 2 Timothy where this is clear. We have to be on the lookout for both. What did Paul say to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:29-30? "I know that after my departure," remember he served there for almost three years, "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock..." These are false teachers who come in from the outside who bring their false teaching and try to inject it into the life of the church. But then he says, "...and from your own selves," talking about the Ephesian elders, "men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." Error can arise from within the church itself, so we have to guard the truth.

But specifically, as you think about this duty, Dusty, what are the threats? And this is true for all of us, by the way. What are the threats to the treasure? What are we supposed to be on the lookout for? This is a surprising one. Guard the truth from distraction. You remember what happened in Acts 6? The Hellenistic widows weren't being cared for in the church, and so they brought the issue to the apostles. And listen to what the apostles said. Acts 6:2: "...the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, 'It is not desirable,'" it's not a good thing, "'for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.'" So they're going to manage this and make sure it's cared for, but they don't want to be *distracted* from the treasure. "...we will

devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." You will always face the temptation to replace the most important thing with important things. This is ministry to people. This is important. It has to be done. It has to be accomplished. But the ministry of the Word becomes the chief priority. Distraction.

Another threat to the treasure is distortion. Look at chapter 2 of 2 Timothy, 2:17. After mentioning the sick words of false teachers spreads like gangrene—among whom those false teachers are Hymenaeus and Philetus, "men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some." Here are guys who believed in a resurrection, but they distorted the truth and said it's already happened, and it wrecked the faith of some of the believers. We are forever facing the distortion of the truth, and we have to guard the truth against it. Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:16 about Paul's letters, and he says there are things in Paul's letters "hard to understand, which the untaught and the unstable distort, as *they* do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction." We always have to be on the alert for the distortion, the wrong emphasis. We've seen this unfold in the Christian circles just in recent years. A wrong emphasis, an unhealthy emphasis, that distorts the teaching of Scripture.

A third threat to the treasure is deletion or addition. We're warned about this. Deuteronomy 4:2, "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you." Of course, the prime example of adding to the word of God was whom? The Pharisees. They added a long list of things you ought to do. We always have to be on the alert for those who, with the best of intentions, add to the Scripture. But there are those who add with the worst of intentions as well. Revelation says the same thing. "I testify", Revelation 22:18, "to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book." That doesn't mean somebody's going to lose their salvation. It means if you monkey with God's Word, if you take away or you add to, you're not really a Christian at all, because we hear God. We hear His Words.

By the way, an example of this is even in Paul's letter to Timothy. In 1 Timothy chapter 4, you have those who forbid marriage and forbid eating certain foods. False teachers. They're adding to.

So, we are to beware of the threats to the treasure. There's another threat, and that's destruction of the Word. Here's the bottom line. If you distort the Scripture enough, you destroy it. I won't take you to Galatians chapter 1, but you remember what Paul says there. He says there are those who are preaching another gospel. It's not really another gospel; it's a distortion of the true

Gospel, but he says it's distorted enough where it becomes works-based and it becomes a damning error. It becomes an utterly false gospel. We have to beware of these threats to the truth.

If you doubt that there's a need to guard the truth, I think going back to 1:15. In verses 15 to 18, we see in context those who serve as an illustration for those who guarded the treasure and those who didn't. Verse 15 is an illustration of all those who didn't guard the treasure, and in verse 16 we meet one man who courageously did.

Dusty, you have to guard the treasure. If you're going to love the truth, you have to hate weeds. You have to hate error. You have to hate the things that destroy it. If you're going to love what God has planted, then you have to hate those things that destroy it. You have to guard it from being lost in your own distraction with other things, even good things. You have to guard it from its truths being destroyed and distorted. You have to guard it from those who would take away or add to it. Guard the treasure.

There's one more imperative regarding your stewardship of the truth, and that is *pass on the truth*. Verse 1 of chapter 2: "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Paul here continues the series of commands to Timothy, and the point of this command, and he's already made this point in chapter 1, is that Timothy—and this is such an encouragement to me, because I feel this—is completely unable to perform these responsibilities in his own strength. We can't do this on our own. This is beyond us. Notice in verse 1, in the Greek text, the pronoun *you* is emphatic. It's *you*, Timothy, in contrast to all those people back in 1:15, you Timothy, my son—that's a term of endearment, a gentle reminder that God had used Paul to bring Timothy to faith—you be strong. Now that is a little bit of a deceptive translation, because literally it is this: *Be continually strengthened*. You see, this isn't a call to make ourselves strong. I can't make myself strong enough to do this. Instead, this is a call to allow God to empower you with His strength so that you can carry out these commands. What's the source of this strength to accomplish this mission? Notice he says in verse 1, by "the grace that is in Christ Jesus." It's the same grace that's available to every one of us who are in Christ. If you're a Christian, the grace to do what God has called you to do is yours. If that's obeying him, living a life of obedience, if that's doing what you need to do in your family; whatever it is, if God's called you to do it, the grace to accomplish that in a way that honors Him is already yours in Christ Jesus.

In verse 2, he gives him a specific command regarding the truth, having said where his power comes from to do these things, he says, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Notice that word *entrust*, the main verb of the sentence. It's the verb form of the noun *deposit* back in verse 14. He's saying, 'look, you've received the deposit from me; now

you take and deposit the truth with others.’ How do you deposit this truth with faithful men? Basically, it includes both teaching and modeling. If I had time, I’d take you back to 1 Timothy 4, where in verse 11 he says, “Prescribe and teach these things,” and in verse 12 he says ‘Be an example.’ That’s how you entrust them to others. You teach them and you serve as an example; you model it. Notice this isn’t a suggestion. It’s a biblical mandate. *Entrust* is an imperative, for Timothy and for all church leaders, and by application by the way for all of us who are in the church. What is the church responsible to impart to the next generation? Notice in a strange construction, Paul begins verse 2 with the direct object: “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses.” That’s what you are to entrust. In other words, the whole package of all that Timothy had heard from Paul over all the years. Timothy as I mentioned was converted on Paul’s first missionary journey. He accompanied him on the others as well. He was with Paul during his first Roman imprisonment, the one we read about at the end of Acts 28. He ministered with Paul in Ephesus, and as we learn was eventually sent there to pastor. It’s where he was when he received these two letters from Paul. By the time Timothy received 2 Timothy from Paul, he had been Paul’s disciple for 20 years.

There was so much Timothy had learned from Paul, but he’s not just talking about the day-to-day example Paul had laid. Notice the added expression, what “you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses.” This shows us Paul’s not talking about his personal interactions with Timothy. He’s talking about his authoritative teaching as an apostle. He is directing Timothy to invest the inscripturated truth that he learned from Paul in men who will teach the truth, and live the truth, and guard the truth, and pass on the truth.

How do you choose people like that? How do you choose men in whom to invest your life, who will take that deposit and make sure it’s secure for the next generation. Notice Paul gives three criteria in verse 2 to help us choose wisely. First of all, commitment—they must be faithful men who will be able to teach. That means that the church and the leaders know enough about these men that they can confirm that they’re faithful men. This, by the way, is why we don’t allow anyone who just comes in new to our church to teach. We need to know something about this person and their commitment to Christ and their commitment to the church. They must be men who are already showing commitment to the life and ministry of the church, men whom the entire church can affirm. So there has to be commitment.

Second criterion. There has to be character. Notice Paul says they must be *faithful* men, not merely believers but reliable, dependable men who can be trusted to guard the treasure. Negatively, that means they’re not going to be people who take the truth, and they neglect it for their own ideas or they distort the truth. Positively it means they can be trusted to handle accurately the Word of truth. Why is this important? I wish I could take you through 1 and 2 Timothy and show you, because frankly, just in 2 Timothy, here’s what we find. There are defections from the faith in 1:15. There are leaders who go astray from the truth in 2:18. There

are people who oppose the truth in 2:25. There are church leaders who oppose the truth in 3:8. The church membership will turn from the truth and not endure sound doctrine in 4:3-4. So these men have to be faithful.

There's one additional criterion for picking the right men. It's capacity. Notice verse 2: Paul says they must be able to teach others. The Greek word for able means *sufficient for a task, competent, qualified*. Sufficient in what? Teaching. We're not talking about some human capacity. In other words, the church discerns that these men have been gifted by God to teach, and they are competent to teach others. Now here's where I want you to really think with me. When we think about the Christian faith, we are very tempted to become very myopic. It's about *me*. It's about *my own walk* with Christ. Paul won't allow us to do that. Notice in this verse, he says we can't merely think about our church's needs, even. Not only can we not just think about ourselves, we can't just think about our *own* church's needs or in the immediate future. Our perspective is to be much more long-range than that. We are responsible to pick faithful men who will be able to carry on this process of living the truth, teaching the truth, guarding the truth, and passing the truth on to the next generation.

Dusty, let me wrap all this together, the reason we're here tonight. Paul's point to Timothy, and mine to you, is that you stand in a long line of godly men. I love the fact that Jesus himself said I'm not teaching my own words—I'm teaching what the Father gave me. So, the Father gave Jesus the words to teach. Then, Jesus says I'm giving you, my apostles, the words I want you to teach. And here even the words I want you to write down. So the Father gives the words to Christ, Christ gives the words to the apostles, the apostles write those words in a book to give them to us, and they pass those words on to faithful men like Timothy, leaders in the church. Those leaders then, in turn, pass the truth on to faithful men who pass the truth on to faithful men who pass the truth on to faithful men, and here we are tonight. This is how the truth, the treasure, the good deposit has been protected and passed down for 2,000 years of church history. In fact, you know this, but there have been people in your life who have passed the treasure on to you. Your parents in your own home began to pass that treasure along to you, and in the church in which you grew up there were teachers, and there were professors, and there were men whose books you read. There were disciplers. There were seminary professors. There were messages you listened to. And one after another, they deposited the truth of the Christian faith into your life.

Tonight, in this ceremony, the treasure that is sound doctrine, the content of the faith, is being formally deposited with you. You are now part of the pillar and support of the truth. Throughout your ministry, whether it's here at Countryside—and we hope that's for a very long time—or whether the Lord takes you somewhere else in the years to come, your chief responsibility is the treasure. And someday, the Lord will evaluate us based on how we handled the treasure.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 4. I want to finish here. Paul understood this; he lived in the weight of this. He said, "Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." He's talking about the Scripture; the Scripture in his case that had been revealed to him—in our case, that has been passed on to us through the apostles and through faithful people in our lives. We are stewards of God's word. In this case moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. At the judgment, Christ is going to want to know and is going to evaluate how successfully we were a steward of the treasure. Did we teach the treasure or our own ideas? Did we seek to live out the truth of God's word honestly and sincerely from faith and love that are in Christ Jesus? And more than that, did we guard the truth against error? Did we speak up courageously when it was being attacked and distorted and added to and deleted? And did we get serious about making sure not only that we taught the people in our congregation the truth, but that we passed on the baton, the deposit, the treasure, the sacred trust to the next generation who will pass it to the next and to the next until our Lord comes? That's the duty that we have. Let's pray together.

Our Father, these are serious and sobering things, and yet such a joy as well. Father, we thank you for the privilege that belongs to all of us to be a part of your church, to be a part of your family, and to be responsible for this treasure that is the truth. But Father, we thank you especially for the opportunity that you give to men you gift and call to teach that treasure, that truth—to guard it, to live it, to pass it on to the next generation. Father, we thank you for this opportunity tonight. I pray that for all of us who are here you would help us to embrace this mission individually in our lives, corporately as the church. Lord, this is just another emphasis, even as we saw this morning, on the amazing advantage it is to have your Word, the treasure, the deposit of truth. Father, I pray that you would help us all to take that seriously. Bless our time together now as we ordain Dusty to the ministry. May You be pleased, we ask in Jesus' name, amen.