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SECRET OF SUCCESS IN MINISTRY

An AJET Editorial

Having invested years and wealth in training servants of the Lord in our Bible Colleges and Institutes, we desire nothing less than success. Over the years we have pondered the difference between those who prove successful in the ministry and those who fall by the wayside. Paul offered Timothy sound advice which applies to us.

If you are to succeed in ministry, you need to do the following:

1. Train yourself to be godly (I Tim. 4:7,8).

The verb, "to be godly," means to be *reverent, respectful, devout*. Godliness as noble Christian character grows out of divine *worship*. Godliness begins with an attitude of *devotion to God*. Godliness is "a genuine reverence for God that governs one's attitude towards every aspect of life." It is out of this attitude of devotion to God that *godly character* arises.

Godliness requires *training*. The Greek word translated, *train*, was used in reference to *training in sports*. From this Greek word we derive our English word, *gymnasium*. Growth in godliness requires discipline like an athlete.

The secret (mystery) of godliness is *Jesus Christ* (I Tim. 3:16). Jesus is the revelation of godliness. He embodied all that it means to be godly. He was the God-Man who prayed, trusted in his Father and submitted to his Father's will. His lips and life reflected the glory of God. The secret of being godly is to know Jesus Christ. Godliness is derived through abiding in Jesus (John 15:5).

The secret of godliness, therefore, is a strong private life of prayer and Bible study. "And we, who with unveiled faces all behold as in a mirror the Lord's glory, are *being transformed* into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). This training is continuous. "*Train yourself to be godly*" is in the present tense which means *keep on training* yourself. It is not enough to learn to be godly in

Bible College. One must continue the training day by day throughout life.

2. Endure Hardship (II Tim. 2:3-7).

“Hardship” refers literally to *suffering*. Life in ministry is full of suffering. These hardships include financial struggles, jealous leaders, slander, opposition to new ideas and church divisions.

Not only do Christian servants suffer, but Paul reminds us that soldiers, athletes and farmers also suffer. But they have learned to endure their hardships by keeping their eye on the goal (the harvest for the farmer, the victory wreath for the athlete and the approval of the commanding officer for the soldier).

Jesus is our perfect model, “who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). Even as Jesus persevered in his suffering by keeping his eye on the goal, so must we. Failure to keep our eyes on the goal of pleasing the Lord will inevitably lead to failure because of the hardships which must be endured.

3. Set an example for believers (I Tim. 4:12).

Timothy was in his early or middle 30’s. Yet by Greek standards he was “young.” The Greek idea of age was similar to that found in Africa. Today most of our graduates from Bible Colleges are not older than Timothy.

How was Timothy to lead the elders? By living an exemplary life Timothy was to lead the church. Through his *lips* (speech) and *life* he was to lead.

Those ministers of the gospel who fail usually do so in one of three areas: *girls* (lust of the flesh), *gold* (lust of the eyes) and *glory* (pride of life).

In contrast, Paul exhorts Timothy to **purity**, both in body and in the mind, both in the sight of God and in the eyes of others. A life of **faith** will protect one from temptations of greed, covetousness and stealing. Instead of forsaking the ministry for material gain, one will prove faithful to God who called him. If you truly show **love** for others, you will serve humbly and without jealousy or self-seeking.

Perseverance is the key to success in ministry but you can only persevere if you keep on training yourself in godliness in all of life.