

# Don't Rush Into Ministry, Rush to Know God

by Mack Tomlinson

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*This sermon reflects on the speaker's journey in ministry, offering advice to his younger self on the importance of deep Bible study, consistent prayer life, courage in facing challenges, and faithfulness in ministry. The emphasis is on developing a strong foundation in the Word, prayer, and faith, while learning from past mistakes and trusting in God's plan for one's life.*

**Scripture:** 1 Timothy 3:6, Psalm 119:11, James 1:5, Proverbs 16:3, Hebrews 11:6, Proverbs 3:5

**Topics:** "Faithfulness in Ministry", "Importance of Prayer and Bible Study"

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## Description

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## Transcript

If you could go back in time to the first day of your ministry and speak to a young Mac Tomlinson, what would you tell him and most stress to him? Tom would fail me on this one. It's incredible what I would say. There would be so much I'd want to say, like, Mac, you're not ready to preach yet.

Don't start yet. I wasn't ready to preach. I wasn't sounding doctor.

I'd only been saved a year. I was a novice. The Bible says not a novice.

The Southern Baptists say, if he's zealous, let's put him to preaching. Or, you know, my Baptist church. Not every Southern Baptist does that.

I don't mean that. But my point is, I wasn't ready. So I would say, I remember over the years I've thought, I was a single man.

I had a loving mother, adoptive mother. It was her and I. And I've often thought later, I wish I had lived at home longer after I was a Christian, worked part-time, and had read and studied six hours a day. Because I would have had a much deeper foundation.

I would tell that young Mac Tomlinson, read the Bible. Read 12 chapters every day and meditate in it. And take notes.

And never stop doing it. That would have put me reading through the Bible, I don't know how many times a year, several. But one of the men of God, Bill McLeod from Canada, he'd started doing that from the time he was 22 when he was converted.

And he did it for over 60 years. 12 chapters a day. I don't know why 12.

Six in the old, six in the new. But he did it consistently. I would tell myself, you develop your prayer life where you really learn to pray at least an hour or two a day.

And never, never compromise on that. Be with God four hours every day alone. I would say that to that young Mac.

But I didn't know that then. I had nobody to teach me. I had no mentors.

And so, it was only as I read books and I would hear godly men that I recognized were godly, I'd hang out with them, I'd ask questions, that I began to grow and see these things. I would tell that young man, cultivate real faithfulness and don't be in a hurry to have ministry positions. I can look back at hard trials I went through that I don't think I passed the test.

I failed the test. Where I should have made better choices. Discouragements I gave in to.

And then years ago, Linda and I went through a very grievous church division and split. And at the time, I was in my 20s. Or maybe 30.

And it was so hurtful and we were so wounded and I was so discouraged. In my discouragement, I didn't do what I should have done. I didn't have courage.

I didn't stand properly. I didn't address things I should have. Because I was afraid.

I was immature. I was afraid. And the fear of man was a snare.

And so, I would say to that young man, you've got to be strong. You've got to be stronger to take proper stands when they need to be taken. Because my not doing that, not responding rightly to the discouragement, it caused us to move to another location.

And at the time, I didn't see it, but I was moving just out of discouragement. Not moving because God was directing us clearly somewhere. And it cost me 10 years of discouragement.

So, it's those kind of things I probably would say looking back. So, I would say to that young man, go deep in the Bible. Master it.

Have a true prayer life. Find as biblical of a church and as the most biblical preaching as you can. Be under it.

And let your gifts blossom in the context of that. And cultivate faithfulness. Be the best church member you can be.

And you give yourself to the depth of quality preparation and just trust God for the ministry He wants you to have. Because now I'm not doing at all what in the days of my youth I envisioned. You know, probably very few are.

Men who want to preach or pastor who started out 25 years ago or 30 years ago. Many of them, it's not at all what they envisioned it would be. They're not where they thought they'd be.

Because God has a plan for all of us. And it's not in line with our youthful thinking. It's probably different and certainly far better than what we would envision.

So I would also say to that young man, Christianity is really a matter of living by faith. You've really got to know what that is. Let God teach you what it means to live by faith.

Because if you live by faith and you walk in faith, you'll please God. And you won't fail to live the Christian life. You mentioned praying four hours a day.

I guess practically, how does that look? Or when you mention that, could you explain what you're picturing? Yeah. Well, I wasn't trying to say pray four hours a day. I meant as a young man, as a single man, when I didn't have a family yet and I was starting out, I wish that somebody had said to me, Mac, right now, you could spend four hours with the Lord every day reading two hours, reading three hours.

Read your Bible for an hour and a half. Be reading a good book. Pray 30 minutes here.

Later today, pray 30 minutes again. As a single man living at home alone, I could have done that if I'd known. You know, when you get older and married and you're working and active, that can happen.

It won't be practically possible, but in the context of beginning my early Christian life, when I had the freedom to do it for preparation and growth, what would I do again? It would be that.

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