

Don't let anyone Look Down on you

1 Timothy 4:12-16

“Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. ¹³ Until I get there, focus on reading the Scriptures to the church, encouraging the believers, and teaching them ¹⁴ Do not neglect the spiritual gift you received through the prophecy spoken over you when the elders of the church laid their hands on you. ¹⁵ Give your complete attention to these matters. Throw yourself into your tasks so that everyone will see your progress. ¹⁶ Keep a close watch on how you live and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you.”

A drunk was miraculously converted at a downtown mission in one of our larger cities. Prior to his conversion, Joe had gained the reputation of being a dirty wino for who there was no hope, only a miserable existence in the ghetto. But following his conversion to a new life in Christ, everything changed. **Joe became the most caring person that anyone is associated with the mission had ever known.** Joe spent his days and nights hanging out at the mission doing whatever needed to be done. There was never any task that was too lowly for Joe to take on. **There was never anything that he was asked to do that he considered beneath him.** Whether it was cleaning up the vomit left by some violently sick alcoholic or scrubbing the toilets after careless men left the bathroom filthy, Joe did what was asked with a soft smile on his face and with a seeming gratitude for the chance to help. He could be counted on the feed feeble men who wandered into the mission off the street, and to undress and tuck into bed men who were too out of it to take care of themselves.

One evening, when the director of the mission was delivering his evening evangelistic message to the usual crowd of still and sullen men with drooped heads, there was one man who looked up, came down the aisle to the altar and knelt to pray, crying out for

God to help him to change. The repentant drunk kept shouting, “Oh God, make me like Joe! Make me like Joe! Make me like Joe! Make me like Joe!” The director of the mission leaned over and said to the man, “Son, I think it would be better if you prayed, Make me like Jesus.” The man looked up at the director with a quizzical expression on his face and asked, “Is he like Joe?”

In our studies of 1 Timothy, we have seen Paul deal with church leadership, apostasy, and encourage spiritual growth. In verse 12 he begins with these words, “Let no one despise your youth...” It is obvious that Timothy was a very young man, probably would be considered one of our Youth. Paul knew there would be those in the church who would be critical of Timothy’s ministry and leadership because of his age.

Therefore, Paul gives him this excellent advice, “...but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” **How could Timothy put a stop to the criticism concerning his youthfulness?** By letting other see godly character in his life.

Now we know that age has never been an issue with God. We know that God used Abraham, Moses, Jacob and other Old Testament characters well into their hundreds.

But we also know that God has used young men and women to accomplish His purpose. Let me give you just a few examples:

- **God used Joseph to save Israel in a time of famine.** He was just seventeen when sold as a slave to Potiphar.
- **God used David to deliver Israel from the Philistines.** We know from Scripture that David was “just a kid” when he slew Goliath and defeated the Philistines.
- **God used Solomon to lead Israel to its greatest heights.** When Solomon became the third king he thought of himself as a child.
- **God used Josiah to restore Judah to the true worship of God.** According to 2 Chronicles 34:1-2 Josiah was only eight years old

when he became king. When sixteen, he sought to serve God, and when he turned 20, he instituted religious reforms throughout Judah. When he turned 26, he restored the temple, and the Passover.

- God used Jeremiah to prophesy to the nations. Jeremiah 1:7-8 tells us that Jeremiah tried to escape his prophetic call, because he thought he was too young.

- God used a young virgin to bring the Savior to the world. Historians tell us that Mary was probably in her early to middle teens when she became pregnant.

- And, obviously, God used this young man by the name of Timothy to proclaim the Gospel to the lost. To give you an idea of just how young Timothy must have been when he joined Paul, this letter was written over twenty years later and Paul still tells him that people would criticize him for his age.

So throughout the Scripture God has revealed to us that it does not matter if we are young or old, if He does the calling, He will do the equipping. In fact, Paul put it this way in Philippians 1:6, “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ.”

So whether we are young or old Paul names several areas of life in which you and I should be *examples*.

First, we should an example of biblical principles. I heard a story of a man who used his seven-year-old son’s baseball bat to smash the slick coat of ice on his driveway. He got cold and went inside for a cup of coffee before attempting to clear the car. Several minutes later, his son, who had been outside with him, came in. “Dad,” he said, “I got the ice off the car.” “How did you do that?” his father asked. “The same way you did,” the boy shrugged, “with the baseball bat.”

Psychologists tell us that people like to have an example to follow, and there are some people who need to have an example to follow. For many people in the world today, they find their examples

on television and movie screens, or in the music videos, or in the styles of the so-called “rich and famous.” Sadly, most of these examples are not good examples for people to follow and do not show how to live a Christ-like life. It is a sad thing to hear a kid today tell you their examples and role models, because the example often stinks. I believe that we desperately need Godly examples for people to be able to follow. We need people who can show people what it means to live a Christian life and how Christ changes your life.

Paul lived in a world that had no long record to establish credibility; therefore, individuals would have to earn the respect of his people. Therefore, when Paul exhorted Timothy to be an example of those who believe, he used the Greek word for “pattern” or “model.” So Paul is simply saying to each of us as believers, if we are ever to gain the respect of the people who know us best, we must be a “model” of biblical principles.

Second, we should be an example in our speech. It is a biblical fact that a person’s speech reflects what is in his or her heart. James 3:2-9 reads like this in the Greek, “Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way. We can make a large horse go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth. And a small rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot chooses to go, even though the winds are strong. In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself. People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison. Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God.”

Now we need to understand that when the Bible refers to swearing it is referring to using the name of Jehovah, or some false god to justify a lie. When James talks about the misuse of the

tongue, he is speaking about lying about, or being critical of, or gossiping about other people. Paul put it this way in Ephesians 4:25 when he says, “Therefore, putting away lying, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.” **There is nothing that reveals a hypocritical heart and more quickly destroys a person’s credibility than lying.** In fact, Proverbs 6:16-17 tells us that God “hates lying.” Ephesians 4:26 forbids “angry speech,” verse 29 forbids “impure speech,” and verse 31 forbids “slandorous words.”

The Bible is simply teaching us that when we lie, gossip, slander, and are critical in our speech, we are simply revealing an impure heart. Therefore, we should be an example in our speech.

Third, we should be an example in our relationships. 1 John 4:8 and 16 tells us, “God is love.” **Therefore, from eternity past and into eternity future God has always existed in an intimate loving relationship because love is the very nature of God.** Before there was time the Father “loved the world.” Jesus put it this way in John 11:35, “By this shall all man know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.”

Biblical love is far different from the emotion our culture calls love. It involves self-sacrificing service on behalf of others regardless of how one feels. In John 15:13 Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” **That verse sums up the essence of the Christian life as self-sacrificial love.** The Christian is the kind of person that gives his time and energy to meet the needs of hurting people. Philippians 2:17 seems to indicate that no personal sacrifice was too great for Paul, “Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.”

Therefore, one of the ways we have been made like God is that we too can share in loving relationships; like God we can give and receive love. When you experience God’s love for you, when the your love for your spouse is expressed, when you know the joy of

your child or grandchild's love for you, when a friend shows you compassion - in these and countless other ways in which you can give and receive love - it is all because God made you to be like Him. I am convinced we are most like God when we give love to others. Love is selflessness; thinking not about yourself, but thinking first of those you love.

Last of all, we should be an example of faith. Someone once said, "The door through which Jesus enters the human heart, and thereby makes you His temple, swings on the hinges of grace, but faith is the key that unlocks that door."

Jesus made it very clear that all of God's blessings come to us through faith, as seen in Matthew 9:29, "According to your faith let it be to you." Therefore, the benchmark of blessing is not according to our feelings, friends, fame, or fortune, but according to our faith. The measure of accomplishment in the Christian life is faith.

Conversely, most of the problems of the Christian's life are caused by lack of faith. Worry, for instance, is the opposite of faith. Worry is an insult to God. Worrying is like saying, "God, I don't think You can handle this particular problem."

Hebrews 11:1-2 gives us this description of faith, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony."

To my knowledge, there is no definition of faith given in the Scriptures. Hebrews 11:1-2 gives us a *description* of what faith is.

Therefore, faith is not positive thinking. It is not following a hunch. It is not a feeling of optimism. It is not hoping for the best. All of these may be well and good, but they are not biblical faith.

What then, is faith? Faith is "substance" and "evidence." Look again, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things

not seen.” In other words, faith is simply trusting God to do what He says He will do in your life!

Now remember, we are talking about examples. And Hebrews 11:2 says, “For by it (their faith) the elders obtained a good testimony.” They obtained “a good testimony” not by their *accomplishments*, not by their *prestige*, not by their *personality*, but by their “faith.”

Child of God, the world is looking for something real. They are looking for people with a consistency in their life. They are looking for someone who is walking the walk not just talking the talk. Therefore, Paul says, “Be an example...”