

1 Timothy

I. Introduction

A. **1 Timothy 4:10-12** . . . For it is for this (*personal godliness and the spiritual health of the church*) we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers. [11] Prescribe (*command, require*) and teach these things. [12] (*And in the process*) Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.

B. Pray

II. Being an example of those who believe

A. **Vs 12** begins with the words, “Let no one look down on your youthfulness.” In youth group circles, these words have provided inspiration for numerous sermons, Bible Studies, Sunday School classes, Youth Group meetings, and books for young people.

1. And this is good – if these presentations use the rest of the verse to explain, **first**, how young people are to go about this, and **second**, what kind of life they are to lead so that no one has a just cause to look down on their youthfulness.
2. However, it is probable Timothy was in his early 30's when Paul wrote this, and by that time he bore the responsibility of being the leader of the church in Ephesus – which means these words are not just for teenagers.
3. Therefore, we are going to apply this verse to all of us, young and old alike, because it has much to say about being an example of those who believe – an example in relation to
 - a. your reputation,
 - b. having the character qualities needed to earn and therefore deserve genuine respect,
 - c. and living according to what you claim to believe and teach.
4. Given the context, the purpose of these words at the beginning of **vs12** is to caution us against letting anyone **deter** us from promoting or encouraging or exhorting them to believe that godliness in daily living is as important to the Christian life as being born again – be they a senior citizen or someone in a position of authority or even someone with an attitude of superiority.

5. But not letting anyone deter us from presenting the need for godliness is only half of Paul's exhortation. The other half deals with the requirement to live and speak in such a way as to remove any legitimate reason for someone to disregard or discount or try to deter our efforts at promoting godliness.
 - a. The reality is, when a portion of our daily living contradicts what we claim to believe or say to others, we give them a justifiable reason to label us hypocrites, to reject what we are saying, and to take action to deter us from saying it to others.
 - b. And when this happens, we are fulfilling Ralph Emerson's proverb, "Your actions speak so loudly, I cannot hear what you are saying."
 - c. For this reason, we are to be such good examples of how a Christian ought to live that no one can find a legitimate reason to ignore us or seek to silence us.
 6. For Christians, the principle goes like this: living according to what you say you believe affects your reputation for the good. A good reputation affects the respect you deserve and are likely to receive from those around you. When you are respected, those listening to you are more likely to take what you say seriously.
- B. The second half of vs 12 says, "in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe." In preparation for looking at each of these five qualities, I want to point out three things.
1. **First**, the first two qualities, speech and conduct, refer to what people see and hear. The second three qualities, love, faith and purity, are what determines the quality of your speech and conduct.
 2. **Second**, you can try to hide your lack of love, faith and purity by saying and behaving as a Christian ought. But you can be sure that your lack of love, faith and purity will shine through at enough times and in enough ways to expose your hypocrisy.
 3. **Third**, though age is a factor in determining who should be in a position of authority, character is to be even more of a factor.
 - a. In the earliest days of the church, the disciples affirmed this truth when dealing with a conflict over care of the widows.
 - b. **Acts 6:1-3**, "Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for

us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of **good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom**, whom we may put in charge of this task.” Notice the emphasis on godly character!

C. Speech

1. The first quality Paul points to is speech, that is, how we talk to the people in our lives – be they family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, or fellow Christians.
2. When talking to others, our tone of voice, choice of words, and timing, that is, when we say something, all convey information that goes beyond the message.
 - a. For example, along with the message, tone of voice can convey understanding, kindness, and patience, or frustration, anger, condemnation.
 - b. The same thing happens with our choice of words and timing. In spite of the intentions of our message, choice of words and timing can add inferences that either help or hinder the other person from wanting to deal with the intended message.
3. There are **three** easy ways to discern how you talk to those around you, that is, what you sound like to them, and the inferences your tone of voice, choice of words, and timing add to your message.
 - a. **First**, ask God for discernment regarding what you sound like and the inferences you are conveying – especially when talking to those nearest and dearest to you.
 - b. **Second**, listen to yourself – as if you were the other person – and ask yourself how it would sound to you if you were them.
 - c. **Third**, ask those dearest to you what you sound like in certain situations, or what you sounded like in a recent interaction.
4. The Bible has a number of scriptures that address our speech. I have narrowed them down to six for the sake of time.
 - a. **Psalms 37:30–31**, “The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice. [31] The law (*scripture*) of his God is in his heart; his steps (*speech*) do not slip.”
 - b. **Proverbs 16:21**, “The wise in heart will be called understanding, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.”
 - c. **Ephesians 4:15a**, “...speaking the truth in love...”
 - d. **Colossians 4:6**, “Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.”

- e. **1 Corinthians 14:8-9**, “For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? [9] So also you, unless you utter by the tongue **speech that is clear**, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.”
 - f. **James 1:26**, “If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart (*by thinking he is religious*), this man’s religion is worthless.”
5. When we speak honestly and respectfully, when we use words and a tone of voice that convey an honest interest to understand first, and if needed, condemn second, when we come at people with sympathy for their situation, and when we show compassion and mercy when criticizing or condemning, we honor God, we honor our religion, and we show ourselves an example of those who believe.

D. Conduct

1. Conduct is the sum of all your behaviors – on good days and bad days, with loved ones or with enemies, when you’re tired and frazzled or rested and refreshed, or at home or at church. Conduct is the fullest expression of who you are from the inside out.
 - a. For example, we encounter various situations, experience various circumstances, and deal with various kinds of people day after day. How we deal with each of these things becomes the sum of all our behaviors, and that makes up our conduct.
 - b. Conduct is such a complete indicator of who we are that God says He will judge us according to our deeds, or conduct.
 - c. Jesus confirmed this in **Matthew 16:27**, “For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds.
 - d. This truth is affirmed by a number of other scriptures, such as Jeremiah 17:10, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Revelation 2:23; 20:12; 22:12.
2. For this reason, the word of God exhorts us:
 - a. To be holy in **all** our behavior (**1 Peter 1:15**).
 - b. To conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (**Philippians 1:27**).
 - c. To walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, and to please Him in all respects (**Colossians 1:10**).
 - d. And to walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls us into His own kingdom and glory (**1 Thessalonians 2:12**).

3. In **1 Corinthians 13:1-2**, the Bible addresses the problem of bad conduct being a legitimate reason for others to ignore what we say. For example, words that lack the conduct of love to back them up become painful to the hearer's ears and show us to be unworthy of being considered important.
4. I am reasonably certain all of you are aware of at least some of your behaviors, but are you aware of your conduct, that is, the sum total of your behaviors? Are you aware of how your behaviors and your overall conduct affects others? Do you care?
5. This is where the next quality, **love**, is so important, because who you love the most will determine how much you care about how your conduct effects those around you.
6. Therefore, in our conduct, we are to show ourselves an example of those who believe.

E. Love

1. Though love is shown on the outside, it is built on who we are on the inside. And though anyone can give love to get love, or give love in response to being loved, the purest motive for giving love is seeking the good of those who are in some way effected by your choices and behavior – and that includes God.
 - a. Those who genuinely love know that love is to be outward flowing, not inward flowing. It is about giving, not receiving.
 - b. True, we all want to be loved, and in my opinion, this is a God-given desire. So there is nothing wrong with wanting to be loved. Yet in a sinful world, the odds are slim that you will be loved like you ought to be loved by anyone other than God.
2. So, what are we to do? The natural or most common response is to withhold love and replace the love we ought to be giving with hurt, withdrawal, the silent treatment, unkindness, anger, abusive words, bitterness, and on and on.
 - a. However, such responses go against **Romans 13:10**, “Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”
 - b. In other words, we become as sinful as the one failing to love us when we choose not to love them as we ought.
3. So, what are we to do? As Christians, we are to love those around us as God loves us. We are to make giving love more important than getting love, and being loving more important than being loved. For it is in this way that we become an example of those who believe.

F. Faith

1. **Colossians 2:6** says, “Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”
2. Did we not receive Christ Jesus by faith? Then we are to move forward in living the Christian life by that same kind of faith.
 - a. If we believed the gospel of salvation, then we are to believe what the scriptures say about how to live – as children, as teens, as adults, in marriage, as parents, as workers, as neighbors, as citizens, and as church members.
 - b. If believing the gospel of salvation required appropriate action on our part, then believing what the scriptures say about how to live also requires appropriate action on our part. To do otherwise is to try to live the Christian life by something other than faith, and that is impossible.
3. As the scripture says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (**Hebrews 11:6**). And **James 2:20** says, “Faith without works is useless,” that is, faith that does not show itself in your choices and behavior, is useless.
4. Therefore, like Christian love, Christian faith is shown on the outside. But the outward manifestations of our faith comes from who we trust the most (*God or self*), and that is determined by who we are on the inside.
5. May we, people of faith, trust God implicitly so that our conduct is an example of those who live the Christian life by faith.

G. Purity

1. As with love and faith, purity of life is shown on the outside, but its life source and motivation comes from within – from purity of heart and purity of mind.
2. Though we can and ought to apply the ideal of purity to most areas of life, it often is applied to sexual morality – as it ought to be since so many in the world and the church lack purity of heart, mind, and therefore, conduct in relation to sexual morality.
3. But let us not limit our pursuit of purity to sexual morality, because we need purity in other areas as well – including the way we think, what we desire, how we talk, and how we behave.
4. For example, double-mindedness is a form of impurity. A pure mind is single-minded. And one of the ways to pursue purity of mind is to use **Philippians 4:8** to put boundaries around and give direction to our thinking and pondering.

5. Interestingly, Jesus said that it is the pure in heart who see God (**Matthew 5:8**). So not only does purity of heart enable you to be an example of Christian living, it also enables you to encounter God in a personal, intimate way that far exceeds encountering Him through knowledge alone.

III. Conclusion

- A. Everyone one of us is an example of something. We may never be a perfect example of what a Christian ought to be, but we ought to do our best, with God's help and empowerment, to make a sincere and planned effort to grow and change and mature so that we continue to become more and more of what a Christian ought to be.
- B. Albert Barnes said, "A minister should so live, that if all his people should closely follow his example, their salvation would be secure, and they would make the highest possible attainments in piety."
- C. David Bayne says, "We all should so live that those around us can follow our words and deeds toward a genuine faith in God and a sincere life of godliness."
- D. Therefore, may we, in the daily affairs of life, be an example of those who believe.