



## “...be an example.”

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**1 Timothy 4:10 - 16** 10 For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. 11 These things command and teach. 12 Let no one despise your youth, but be

*an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. 15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. 16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.*

Paul the apostle knew better than most what it meant to endure the intense fires of testing and the deep trials of faith. He knew what it meant to be broken and then “rebuilt” into the image of his Lord and Master. Even with all of this occurring *to* him and *around* him, Paul also understood that whether he wanted to be or not, he would be an example to those around him. Thus he willingly instructed the young men that were in his sphere of influence, both verbally and via his life example. Whether a man or woman will receive and embrace these life’s lessons will determine whether or not they will be significantly used in the service to the king, or whether they will spend their lives in the bleachers merely watching. Paul understood that he therefore needed to actually *be* a righteous example, and that is a calling most of us will summarily reject.

Paul calls upon the older men and women in Titus to “...*in all things showing yourself [to be] a pattern.*” Meaning that they are to be examples to the younger men and women of their community in the way they are to live. Not only do we most often reject this call, but we in fact often serve rather as examples of what *NOT* to do! Ungodly practices in marriage and financial spending, our poor interactions with our spouses, our public ridicule of other people, even purposefully exposing them to the presence and interaction of people who are verbally and overtly anti-god and anti-church. Yes...you are an example alright, and eventually you will see the fruits of your labors!

Paul not only knew he was an example, but he would embrace the roll however daunting it might be. He would go so far as to refer to this young pastor Timothy as “my own son in the faith.” It is commonly accepted that Paul had personally led Timothy to salvation early in their relationship, and then he was subsequently disciplined, trained, and “sent out” by Paul into the field of ministry. In this letter, Paul writes to young Timothy to instruct him on the priorities and the operation of the local church, as well as the Godly conduct of the individuals who make up that church body. And he did all of this not just in words but in his genuine living and model of life. After all, everyone knows words are cheap.

### 4:10-11

To what end is Paul referring to? Godliness! (vs 8) He said “godliness is profitable for *all* things...” Yet to attain such there is clearly labor on our part and persecution to endure. There is no other way. A real Christian is known as much for his or her trials as his or her blessings. If we solely ‘trust in the living God’ we will be beat up for it...by those outside the church as well as often even those who say they are part of it.

The scriptural stand that Paul is calling for will not always make you a popular individual nor make us a popular church. It's sad acknowledgment, but often the greatest persecution and trial comes from within the recognized "church" of today. There are those who say we are legalists because we believe God and the Bible when he calls for holy living and a "Jesus first before everything" lifestyle. Then there are those who wag their finger at you because you have a glass of wine with your dinner, or because you have a tattoo or a piercing. Following the Word, and the Word only, will often make one a target for persecution from the compromised religious realm, as well as the politically correct movement in the world at large.

*"I have set the LORD always before me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope." (Ps 16:8-9)*

We as true and faithful practitioners of faith are instructed to "hold the course." Every week that passes that simple instruction becomes increasingly challenging. Teach the truth. Command or "charge" the church body with the truth. And do so without apology. We must "hold fast."

#### **4:12**

Timothy was no doubt just a young man at this point. Religious leadership at that time was strongly geared toward those of chronological age, and in many ways remains so even yet today.

It's ironic that age was a plus in those days, because often it can seem to be a detriment today. By the time the years have passed, most of us have put down roots that we at least *believe* gives us a righteous "pass" on kingdom priority and indeed such often prohibits us from being significantly used by God for the furthering of His kingdom. Yes, *sadly*, such is usually true without some significant life changes. Changes that few are willing to make.

It is a crisis within the greater faith for sure. The love of many has not so much been abandoned as having "grown cold." (Matt 24:12). Mortgages, debt, kids, hobbies, grandkids, careers, etc...they all can stack up to keep us "out of the battle." Back then it was because you didn't have the years, the experience, and you were afraid of the unknown. And now it's most often because you don't have the real love of Christ impassioning you.

Let me be blunt. Frankly, we're so often just too busy, too self-centered, too carnal. And so over and over...countless times, the years come and they go and we repeatedly miss our "window of opportunity." But for those of you still young and zealous, now is your time...your day. God wants to open the flood gates of opportunity for each of you. A chance to be a part of changing the world.

This verse is not reserved for pastors. For this is simply what it means to actually "be a disciple." Of course this cannot help but cause us to ponder and consider how many of us can truly wear that badge? But those who are young...ahhh, the door remains open still! For you, it is your time!

Even Timothy was not without his own issues and struggles! Who isn't? It's generally understood that he had a personality that was naturally weak, and physically he had issues too. The scriptures lend to the idea that he had stomach problems, and a meek temperament.

Paul was grooming Timothy to be his right-hand man, and apparently, he was having a difficult time transitioning into the role of leadership where "he was the man." His youth, as well as all of these other issues seem to have combined to bring about the 'perfect storm' for which Paul now "calls him out."

One thing was for sure, God wanted him. And that was all that really mattered in this, except for one small thing: **Timothy**. He had to be willing, and had to move.

One thing we can do in this matter is not let others stop us. Don't let anyone tell you that you are too young...or for that matter, too old. And don't necessarily expect your greater family to support you in a committed Christian lifestyle...the family of Jesus didn't so why would yours? We must decide just who we are...what our identity is in this life. Because to say we are Christian is to die to ourselves and all of our own plans and surrender our lives to the control of Jesus through the leading of His Holy Spirit.

Ultimately, our lives are to "be an example"...not just to those who are lost and outside of the family of God, but according to this passage, you are called to be an example to those on the inside. Does our speech glorify God? Does it further the kingdom? Does our lives say "committed" and "faithful?" Are we willing to tell ourselves no on issues? Are we willing to do the hard thing? Are we evangelists and disciplers with our words? Because every Christian is called to be one.

Outside of what we say is what we do...our "conduct." Do we truly understand "Christ love" and do we exercise such? Please note I said "Christ love" not the "modern religious love" that looks the other way with sin, and tolerance is the rule of the day? Do we exercise the gentle, gracious, and yet honest "tough-love" of Jesus? Are we examples in Spirit, in our faith, and in our purity?

#### **4:13**

In the way of practical instruction, Paul tells Timothy to "stay in the Word." Statistics tells us that only 34% of Christians read the Bible at least weekly, and only 11% consulting it every day. Frankly it's just not a priority, because to be the kind of "Christian" that most people seek to be, having a dedicated time with God just isn't a necessity. Most people are involved in religion because they are seeking faith to provide for them in some way. But rarely is there a reciprocal attitude involved...one spurred on by their understanding of the cross or their real love for Christ.

We have the mistaken idea today that there is such a thing as a "moderate Christian." One that "includes" God in their lives, but fails to "die to self and surrender their lives to God and kingdom." But that notion is wholly made-up by a generation of religious hobbyists. Such a premise completely fails the biblical "litmus test." Such lives will fail the test because He "never knew you." Truly engaging the kingdom of God is now understood to be reserved for pastors and missionaries. May we remember Romans 8:14 where Paul reminds us that it is those that are "led" by the Spirit of God that are truly the sons of God!

For most, Christianity is included in one's life in an effort to "be happy." As long as it helps achieve some level of personal and earthly happiness, we are still "in." But as often is the case, one day it no longer "delivers" as we want it to and we are then essentially "out."

Paul calls Timothy to practice "exhortation." This is an encouragement and a sharing of the gospel with others. Nehemiah 8:8 describes this act: *"They read from the Book of the Law of God and clearly explained the meaning of what was being read, helping the people understand each passage."*

This is not just speaking of pastoral preaching on Sunday. This is just essential ministry: something we are all scripturally called to do as believers! And it is something we are all capable of! But one must know and understand what the Bible says and means in order to be able to share with others. That will not come via osmosis or by just attending church on Sunday. It will require an "all in" lifestyle. It will require personal-individual engagement. It will require a born again spirit-filled Christianity. The only Christianity there is.

#### 4:14

*“Do not neglect the gift that is in you...”*

Do you know what that gift is? The bible clearly tells us that God gives spirit driven gifts or abilities to everyone that are His. They are passionate acts of service, supernatural abilities, and a blessing to the body of Christ. If you do not know what yours are (there can more than one!), then it could be that:

A) *You haven't asked.*

We need to seek God as to what your service gifts are. There has to be a heart of desire and seeking in us for these gifts.

B) *You are not saved, and thus not filled with the Holy Spirit of God.*

Both are pre-requisites to the discovery and the exercise of God's gifting.

C) *Lastly, it could be that God has you in training and preparation.*

Your gift has not been acknowledged yet as God is preparing you and educating you for the use of such a weapon. His timing is HIS timing...and until such is clarified we must simply be busy about the kingdom of God. He is not going to send you an email on where to download your gift. There's no "app" for this. Such comes through "gnosko"...a knowledge through experience. Honestly, our gifts are *discovered* more than they are *delivered*.

The "laying on of hands" by the eldership of this church will not bring about the clarification of your gifts if any of the previous list is not satisfied. We cannot usurp God's plan on this issue. But we can however...*if all these issue are in place*, lay hands upon you and pray that God would empower you and show you what your gifts are. BUT...*and I cannot stress this issue enough*, if you do not plan to actually use that gift to its fullest, then what is the point?

Above all, God knows your heart and generally acts accordingly!

#### 4:15

Paul is not calling Timothy to "meditate" in the eastern philosophy methodology. We tend to think in such terms when the subject of meditation surfaces. Meditation here means "to care for, attend to carefully, and to practice." So it is obviously more than just a call to "think about it."

Paul calls upon young Timothy to "give himself *entirely* to them." Again, this is a blow to the modern idea of "balance" in the realm of faith practice, and the cry of the modern church to not be "fanatical" about your faith! They killed Jesus because he was a radical. They will likely at least hate you for it too. Truth is, there is simply no way to be accepted and loved by an unredeemed world if you truly live for Christ.

**John 15:18-20** *"If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. Do you remember what I told you? 'A slave is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you."*

If this authentic "Jesus-thing" is really happening in your life, such will be "evident to all." The world will see it, and will no doubt despise and ridicule you for it. Your family will see it, and try to mellow you out. But the

church will see it, and support and back you as a servant. There are no “secret agent Christians.” There are only public ones...

#### **4:16**

Paul warns...as I warn you today, to “take heed to yourself.” To keep a close watch on yourself. Where is your commitment, what is your doctrine...what do you believe and what do you practice?

Ultimately it is *your decision* and *you're doing* that establishes your life. God does all the heavy lifting, but you can open the door or close it when it comes to the Spirits manifest in your life. We must reject this thinking that Christianity can be so ordered in our lives that we can have Jesus and the world. For “*No man can serve two masters...*”

2John 1:8 *Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.*

Titus 2:7 *in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility,*

2Peter 1:10 *“So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away.”*

Paul calls upon Timothy ...*and therefore upon us...* to “continue in these things.” Not just to go through the motions of church and service. There must be more than outward activity! A. W. Pink said: “*Service becomes a snare and an evil if it be allowed to crowd out worship and the cultivation of one's own spiritual life.*”

We are called to continue constant self-observation and self-analysis. Who are we really? What is my true identity?

**Matthew 10:22** says “*you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.*”

All of this does not in anyway mean that your salvation is moment by moment in question or in danger of being ‘recalled.’ It means that despite failed moments and sometimes falling short, if you are really a child of God, you will ultimately thrive...and more than anything, you will endure. For a true believer, there is no ‘back.’ For we have died to that life so there is nothing to go back too, and no way to go there if there was, because we burnt our bridges.

God, and God alone, gives you new and eternal life. But a life reborn has one passion which rules the day. And that is ultimately my choice and yours. And in the end, the world will see it, because there is no way to hide such a light in a world so very dark.