

1 Timothy 4:12-16 – Don't neglect your gift - Be An Example

Michael Silva / June 25, 2017

Opening: Joke: Rich Diet?ⁱ

- One afternoon a rich man was riding in his limousine when he saw two men along the roadside eating grass. Disturbed, he ordered his driver to stop and he got out to investigate.
- He asked one man, 'Why are you eating grass?'
- 'We don't have any money for food,' the poor man replied. 'We have to eat grass.'
- 'Well, then, you can come with me to my house and I'll feed you,' the rich man said.
- 'But, sir, I have a wife and two children with me. They are over there, under that tree.'
- 'Bring them along,' the rich man replied. Turning to the other poor man the rich man announced, 'You come with us, also.'
- The second man, in a pitiful voice then said, 'But sir, I also have a wife and six children with me.'
- 'Bring them all, as well,' the rich fellow answered.
- They all climb in the car, which was no easy task, even for a car as large as the limousine. Once underway, one of the poor fellows turned to the rich gent and said, 'Sir, you are too kind. Thank you for taking all of us with you.'
- The rich man replied, 'Glad to do it. You'll really love my place. The grass is almost a foot high.'
- The point? What God has given us is supposed to be a blessing to others.

Transition: We are on a Journey... through the book of 1 Timothy, which has a lot to say about church leadership, doctrine, and **discipleship**.

1. These words set the standard for pastors and church leaders.
 - a) These are important expectations of those who serve.
 - b) But these instructions are **not** exclusive to leaders, every Christian should aspire to embrace and walk in the standards Paul lays out in our passage today.

Let's read our passage: 1 Timothy 4:12-16 (NKJV)ⁱⁱ And Pray...

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer. - Psalm 19:14

1. Two weeks ago... we read Paul's warning of how in these latter days we will continue to be challenged by those who want to deceive us, those who want us to compromise our faith.

- a) Therefore, we must stay committed to our faith and bringing glory to God, over personal comfort, by exercising ourselves toward God-likeness.

1 Timothy 4:12 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.

1. The reference to **youth** speaks of the **limitations** that we face.
 - a) In the Greek culture, someone **under 40** was considered in their **youth**, which sounds like a **compliment**, especially if you are in your late-30s...
 - i) Except that those in their **youth** were **not** highly respected.
 - b) Timothy fell into this category; historians believe that Timothy was probably in his early thirties at the time this was written.
2. We all have some type of **limitation or constraint** that we must deal with.
 - a) Our culture today loves to **label everything and everyone**.
 - i) It reminds me of Peanuts. **[Play Clip]**
 - b) We think, oh, **if only** I didn't have this label, limitation, or phobias, then I could really serve God.
 - i) Courtney Reissig, writing for The Gospel Coalition, comments, "Only when we begin seeing our limitations as gifts, rather than hindrances, can we begin to better understand God's goodness in his plan for us. God knows the extent and end of our limitations, and he makes no mistakes. Every limitation we face comes from a loving and gracious heavenly Father who only has our best interests in mind. And he is with us every step of the weary path, holding us up and bringing us home. The key to embracing our limitations is not found in our own strength, as if mere willpower would be enough to carry us through. Rather we find the key to our strength in the strength of Another—the God who loves us dearly. That is how we face the trials, disappointments, limits, and sufferings. We trust in the God who made us, saved us, and loves us enough to walk with us even in the darkness."
 - c) Paul tells Timothy **Let no one despise your youth**.
 - i) For us today, don't let perceived limitations or labels keep you from what God has for you.
3. Christians and especially Christian leaders should be living their lives in a way that others can follow.
 - a) Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 11:1** **imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ**.

be an example to the believers in word,

1. This is also translated as be an example in **speech**, or in **what you say**.
 - a) Our words we use and what we say is very important.
 - b) In **James 3** Jesus' half-brother talks about the **taming the tongue**.
 - i) He highlights the **power of the tongue** with the illustrations of...
 - (1) A **bit** in a horse's mouth
 - (2) A **rudder** on a ship
 - (3) A little **flame** that starts a great forest fire.
 - ii) These illustrations highlight how something so small, just like the tongue, can be so powerful.
 - c) We must first **learn to tame the tongue**, and **then to be an example** in word.
 - i) Cussing, questionable and crude humor, rude comments, mean, hurtful, or every hateful words should **not** come from the lips of God's servants.
 - d) Instead, we should use our words to build up others, **not** tear them down.
 - i) **Proverbs 18:21a** Death and life are in the power of the tongue...
 - ii) **Proverbs 16:24** Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, Sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.
2. Are you an **example to the believers in word**?

be an example... in conduct,

1. **Lifestyle evangelism** is a powerful way that can be effective in sharing the gospel.
 - a) Your conduct **should** make it clear that you have been saved and are a follower of Christ.
 - i) Maybe you **don't go to Hooters** with the guys from work at lunch time.
 - ii) Maybe it's that you **don't talk about the boss** behind his or her back like everyone else.
 - iii) Maybe it's the **prayer you say before you eat**, or the language you use which is devoid to vulgarities.
2. But don't forget that we are to be **an example in word** as well.
 - a) Lifestyle evangelism **not** enough to win the world over to Christ.

b) We must share the gospel as well as living it out in our lives.

3. Are you an example in **conduct**?

be an example... in love,

1. This comes from the Greek word **ἀγάπη (agape)**. Agape is a sacrificial love, which puts others ahead of oneself.

2. The love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13 highlights what it looks like to be an example... in love. [Read 1 Cor 13:4-8a]

3. Are you an example in **love**?

be an example... in spirit,

1. This is how we overcome our limitations we just considered in verse 12.

a) We allow God do work in us.

2. **Zechariah 4:6** So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts.

3. Are you an example in **spirit**?

be an example... in faith,

1. Pastors especially and all Christians in general should live out **2 Corinthians 5:7**, which says, **For we walk by faith, not by sight.**

2. Are you an example in **faith**?

be an example... in purity.

1. Being free from any form of sexual impurity in action or your thought life.

a) **Ephesians 5:3 (NIV)** But among you there must **not be even a hint** of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

2. Guys: This is where we often fail.
 - a) Guard your eyes – bounce your eyes when you see something tempting.
 - b) Stay away **anything**, not just porn, that would cause you to lust.
 - c) Know what your triggers are and set boundaries to stay away from them.
 - i) Replace the quick/cheap thrill of an illicit stare with something that glorifies God and satisfies the soul.
 - ii) Say a prayer. Affirm your wife. Recite the Word.
 - iii) **Job 31:1** I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?
3. Ladies: guard your thought life.
 - a) Romance novels, like *Fifty Shades of Grey* and other romance stories and movies cultivate an unhealthy thought life...
 - i) They create an image of an unrealistic man, yet women are overwhelmingly drawn to these types of stories.
 - ii) “Romance novels can be a bad influence on women and lead them to make poor health and relationship decisions,” says a British psychologist.
 - iii) “The novels give women unrealistic views about what to expect out of a relationship because they, well, romanticize love,” said Susan Quilliam, a relationship psychologist based in Cambridge.ⁱⁱⁱ
 - b) I asked Sonya what she would suggest on how to pursue purity and she said...
 - i) “Choice to focus on something different.”
 - ii) **Proverbs 4:23** Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.

1 Timothy 4:13 ¹³ Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

1. This is what the pastor and elders of a church should be devoted to...
 - a) **Reading** God Word! We must spend time read it and meditating upon it.
 - b) **Exhortation** – Challenging others to heed the instructions and examples found in the Word.
 - c) **Doctrine** – This is a word that could also be translated as **teaching** or **instruction**.
 - i) Pastors, in particular, and Christians in general are called to teach others about God’s ways.
 - ii) This comes in two forms:

- (1) Teaching – which we do in services and bible studies.
- (2) Discipleship – small gatherings where believers younger in the faith are taught and encouraged to grow in the faith.

1 Timothy 4:14 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.

1. In **1 Tim 1:3** we talked about how Timothy may have had doubts about himself and his ministry in Ephesus.
 - a) Here is another **exhortation** from Paul to Timothy **not** to quit.
 - b) Quitting would be tantamount to **neglecting** his gift from God.
 - c) Timothy was right where he was supposed to be and Paul was challenging him **not** to leave.
2. Are you right where you are supposed to be?
 - a) What is it that God has said to your heart?
 - b) What has He been saying through His Word to you?
 - c) What are your **gifts** from God? What do others say are your gifts from God?
 - d) Are you using your gifts for God's glory?
 - i) Do not neglect the gift that is in you!

1 Timothy 4:15 ¹⁵ Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

1. **Immerse** yourself in living a godly example as you walk out God's calling and ways in your life.
 - a) Don't halfway commit. Go all in!
2. Notice, Paul doesn't say others should see your **perfection**. It's **progress**.
 - a) All Christians should be **growing**.
 - b) The word progress in the Greek is **προκοπή (prokope)** and it was a **military term** that speaks of an **advancing force**.
 - c) In a like manner, we should be like an advancing force, **gaining ground**, advancing toward ultimate victory.

1 Timothy 4:16 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.

1. Every pastor, like Timothy must **pay close attention** to his life and what he's teaching.
 - a) David **Guzik** comments, "Without giving heed to his life, Timothy might suffer shipwreck (as in 1 Timothy 1:19). Without giving heed to his doctrine, Timothy might lead others astray or leave them short of God's salvation."
2. We cannot save ourselves by good works...
 - a) But continuing in the faith does speak of **perseverance** and **abiding** in Christ, which is part of the process that **leads to our final salvation**.
 - b) And our example and message in Christ has the power to also save **those who hear**.

Conclusion: What's the big take away from this passage?

1. Don't neglect the gift that God has given you!
 - a) Meditate on these things. Give yourself entirely to them. All in! For His glory.

Invitation: Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

ⁱ http://www.guy-sports.com/humor/jokes/jokes_gardening.htm

ⁱⁱ All scripture references, unless otherwise noted, are taken from The New King James Version. (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.livescience.com/14985-romance-novels-bad-women-health-psyche-psychologist.html>