

1 Timothy 4:12-16 - How To Gain Respect And Have Longevity in Ministry

1. 1 Timothy 4:12 NKJV - 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 word youth means a man of military age who was around early 20's to 40 years old. Timothy was likely in his early thirties at best. This made him vulnerable and prone to the mistakes young men do. So Paul is counseling him on how to avoid those pitfalls.
2. If you want older people to respect you, you have to be a young person worth respecting. Paul tells Timothy several areas of life that he needed to be an example in:
 1. **In Word:** His speech was to be honest, loving and true. How he spoke had to present a man of godly behaviour and mature speaking.
 2. **In Conduct:** Not just how he spoke but how he lived and acted. Many people are talkers, Timothy was to not just be a talker but a walker.
 3. **In Love:** He was to be a charitable and kind person, known for his service and kindness. He had to be known as someone who was motivated by love for God and His people, not the applause of men.
 4. **In Spirit:** He had to have a positive disposition towards God. You could understand it as his attitude. He had to have a good attitude, especially as he was serving God. He should be excited about serving God.
 5. **In Faith:** He had to be someone who trusted God and was faithful and trusted Himself.
 6. **In Purity:** He had to be known for maintaining himself pure in a sinful and lustful culture and addressing the women in a godly way.
3. If Timothy lived a life where he excelled and grew in these areas, his life would be one of such godliness and example, no one would be able to accuse him.

2. 1 Timothy 4:13 NKJV - “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”

1. He was also to focus on the right things. All three of these are connected and associated with God's Word. He was to be a man devoted to the Word of God.
2. Especially as young people, we need to focus on what matters. When we don't talk about other things and focus on God's Word and become experts in it, we'll be less prone to sounding young. We'll be less likely to say something foolish.
3. The word means to be absorbed in, to devote yourself too. When older people see a young person devoted with their whole being to God's Word, it causes them to respect them.
4. So we should read God's Word publicly and as a main focus of the service.

5. But exhortation carried the idea of teaching and explaining how to apply it! He was to read the scriptures and show how they are relevant to daily life.
6. Exhortation is paired with doctrine which is the teaching of the meaning of God's Word. Timothy was to be absorbed in God's Word, and be able to explain what it means and how to live it. To do this you have to be a student of God's Word yourself. Apt to teach also means be apt to learn.
3. **1 Timothy 4:14 NKJV - "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. At some point, leaders had prayed over Timothy and he had received a special gifting for ministry. Paul is exhorting him to not let the fire be snuffed out by lack of use. Timothy was to fully exercise the gift he had been given for ministry.
 2. God has given gifts to cultivate. We don't want to be like the servant who didn't multiply what their master gave but hid it under the ground. We have to use the gifts God has given us and use them for his glory.
 3. **Warren Wiersbe - "It is encouraging to know that the God who calls us also equips us to do His work. We have nothing in ourselves that enables us to serve Him; the ministry must all come from God"**
 4. God is the one who enables and gifts us what we need. We need to believe Him and trust Him. It is not by our power, might or ability, but by His Spirit enabling us.
4. **1 Timothy 4:15 NKJV - "Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all."**
 1. If Timothy devoted himself entirely to this one thing, he would gain respect because others would see him grow. Maturity produces respect. Growth is visible. If we want older members to take us seriously, they have to see we are growing to the point it is evident to all.
 2. He had to be dedicated wholeheartedly to the Lord so that no one could deny he was someone devoted to the Lord. He was not to be a passive, but an active Christian. Too many of us are passive in our faith, when we should be actively growing, seeking, serving and knowing.
5. **1 Timothy 4:16 NKJV - "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. Lastly, he was to take heed to himself and to his doctrine. He was to take a spiritual inventory of his teaching and his life. If he didn't take heed to his life, he could shipwreck it. If he didn't take head to his doctrine he could shipwreck others. Timothy had to not neglect his own spiritual life, while also serving and helping others.
 2. Pastors can get so caught up in serving and buildings and administration that they neglect their own walks to the point it is too late. If you want longevity in ministry, you can't neglect yourself. It might seem sacrificial and

godly and noble. But it will ultimately bring you to ruin. In the same way don't neglect the work, because you can harm others and lead them astray.

3. If you want longevity and respect in ministry, you have to give yourself entirely to the Lord and let Him work in and through you, not neglecting your personal relationship with Him, and being wise in what you teach and do!

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to be an example to other believers?

Paul tells Timothy to be an example ****“in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity.”**** Which of these areas do you think is easiest to overlook, and why?

2. Why is knowing God's Word more than simply reading it?

The sermon emphasizes that Timothy was to be devoted to Scripture through ****reading, exhortation, and doctrine****—not only knowing what the Bible says, but understanding it and knowing how to apply it. What is the difference between knowing God's Word and actually living it?

3. What gifts has God given you, and are you actively using them?

Paul told Timothy not to neglect the gift God had given him. What are some ways we can ****neglect or underuse**** the gifts God has given us? What does it look like to intentionally cultivate and use those gifts for God's glory?

4. How can spiritual growth become “evident to all”?

Paul tells Timothy to give himself entirely to these things so that his ****progress would be evident to everyone****. What are some visible signs that a Christian is genuinely growing and maturing in their faith?

5. Why is it important to take heed to both your life and your doctrine?

The sermon points out that neglecting your ****personal walk with God**** can eventually damage you, while neglecting sound doctrine can damage others. Why do you think maintaining both personal spiritual health and biblical truth is essential for lasting ministry?

6. What does “longevity in ministry” require?

The message concludes that lasting ministry requires giving yourself entirely to the Lord while continuing to grow, serve, and guard your personal relationship with Him. What are some things that can slowly pull a person away from that kind of devotion, and what practical steps can help prevent it?