



## “THE VIRTUE OF YOUTH”

**1 Timothy 4:12**

**Theme:** *Authenticity provides power to one’s testimony.*

**Introduction:** I’ve heard aging people cry: “Youth is wasted on the young!” Such a sentiment displays a yearning for the energies, hope, and zeal young people have but are often channeled to worthless pursuits. Older people wish they understood when they were younger what wisdom they have gained in their maturity. Yet, it also suggests a very unfortunate prejudice toward young people that can dismiss their abilities to genuinely make a difference for the Lord.

In our last time together in the previous section, we recognized that *“through God’s grace, every Christian can effectively serve Jesus Christ.”* Now Paul addresses the issue that no believer is exempted from the expectation to serve Jesus. If one is truly born again, they have the indwelling Holy Spirit whose passion is to energize a believer to serve and honor Christ. This includes young people. The Scriptures speak to outstanding young people who made a profound difference to the glory of God – Joseph, David, and Daniel, to name a few. Their ages were not used as excuses for exemption from serving Yahweh – they serve Him even to their peril.

It makes no difference if you are old or young; if one is willing to be exposed to the truths about Christ through the Scriptures and embraces them to the extent that they order their lives accordingly – putting into practice what the Bible teaches, they will make a profound difference. This “authenticity ***provides power to one’s testimony.***”

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| <p><b>I. Eliminate the Excuses for Dismissing Teaching</b></p> <p><b>II. Establish the Example that Dignifies Teaching</b></p> <p><b>III. Embody the Elements that Demonstrate Teaching</b></p> |
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### **I. ELIMINATE THE EXCUSES FOR DISMISSING TEACHING – “LET NO ONE LOOK DOWN ON YOUR YOUTHFULNESS ....”**

#### **A. The Efforts to Evade Truth**

1. Paul provides the wisdom of an older man who has the knowledge of God’s Spirit directing him in what he says and the experience of seeing human nature.

2. He lets Timothy know that one of the ways that people dismiss truth is to illegitimate the one delivering the truth as non-credible.
3. This *ad hominem* tactic is ancient – and the person seeking to evade the truth will feel exonerated by dismissing the things he is responsible to both “*prescribe and teach.*”
4. We now see Paul admonishing Timothy to take his relative youth and inexperience off the table as excuses for people to disregard him by living a life of authenticity, consistency, and power.
  - a) *Timothy joined Paul’s apostolic team around 51 AD on his 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary journey when Timothy was between 22-27 years of age.*
  - b) *When Paul writes to Timothy in our text, it is about 63 AD making Timothy between 24-39 years old.*
  - c) *Irenaeus, who died around 200 AD, stated that until the age of 40, the Greek culture considered a man to be in the 1<sup>st</sup> stage of adulthood and therefore still a youth.*

## B. The Efforts to Emphasize Truth

1. “*let no one despise your youth*” [καταφρονέω] - a responsibility that Paul assigns to Timothy.
2. He does not tell the people not to despise Timothy, but he tells Timothy he must not permit being despised.
3. This term refers to “*looking down on someone or something with contempt or aversion, implying that one considers the object of little value.*”<sup>1</sup>
4. We must not allow ourselves to become the focus but be so faithful to the message of Scripture that we are not the point.
5. I was about 29 when an older man in Byron Center who had once been dominant in the church told me one of the things he hated about me was that I was so accurate in handling the Scripture that I was “like Teflon.”
6. We need to be so nourished by the Word of the faith and sound doctrine that there is no ability to dismiss what is being said.

## II. ESTABLISH THE EXAMPLE THAT DIGNIFIES TEACHING – “... *SHOW YOURSELF AN EXAMPLE OF THOSE WHO BELIEVE.*”

### A. The Exhibition of a Sincere Faith

1. Paul informs Timothy that one of the ways to avoid being dismissed is to

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<sup>1</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 529.

demonstrate in one's life the very thing being taught.

2. The verb for "*show yourself an example*" is [γίνομαι]. – This word means "to become or bring into existence," emphasizing the responsibility Timothy has for a life that is constantly changing to conform to the truth.
3. We are to bring into existence through our lives the example [τύπος] – a word that means to be a model for others to follow - a pattern.
4. This is one of the ends for which our teaching is directed- cp. *1 Timothy 1:5*.
5. This exhibition is not primarily for other believers – although this is certainly important – but must be focused on the lost – the Gospel must not terminate with us but must extend to the lost.
6. Would the Gospel terminate with you if others were to judge its merit based on your example as a believer?

## **B. The Expectation of a Clear Conscience**

1. The specific example we are to set is what all believers should be becoming.
2. One way is to model obedience to the Word.
3. Another way is to submit to the Spirit so that one's heart is being transformed - cp. *1 Peter 1:22*.
4. A believer cannot concern himself with merely external compliance with teaching; he must also concern himself with the internal transformations required to have a sincere conscience when obeying.
5. This has been called the *sine qua non* of a compelling example and serves as the basis on which one's example is legitimate - cp. *Philippians 4:9*.
6. This is why it is necessary to be in one another's lives, not to catch someone in an inconsistency but for the opportunity to affirm the operation of God's grace thru sincere faith and a good conscience.
7. This is why Pastors and elders must be involved in the lives of people thru shepherding, hospitality, and various other forms of fellowship – so that their lives can be a model for others to observe and imitate – cp. *Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-7*.
8. The goal of our example is the display of the power of the Gospel – not for our prestige in the faith, but so that our lives can impact the effect of the Gospel both inside and outside the church.

9. Our church vision statement must include both of these things + "*Grace*

*Bible Church must be a place where each person intentionally helps another follow Christ more* – who is the “another?”

### III. EMBODY THE ELEMENTS THAT DEMONSTRATE WHAT IS TAUGHT – “... IN SPEECH, CONDUCT, LOVE, FAITH, AND PURITY ....”

#### A. Conversation – “Speech”

1. God’s Spirit now provides a catalog of characteristics that will provide evidence of godliness produced by the truth of God’s Word.
2. He begins with the way a person talks – “Speech” [λόγος] – the communication whereby the mind finds its expression.
3. This emphasizes that we cannot gain the respect of people by bragging, boasting, or building ourselves up but by demonstrating by the way we speak that our hearts are being sanctified.
4. Our conversation must demonstrate the power of God’s Spirit directing our hearts, eliminating such things as deceit, exaggeration, boasting, slander, gossip, vulgarity, profanity, and coarse jesting – cp. *Ephesians 4:29; 5:4; Colossians 3:8*.
5. James tells us that the ability to bridle the tongue is the mark of genuine faith – and each of us gains credibility in the eyes of others when God’s Spirit provides us with such self-control – *Matthew 12:34-37*.
6. Being an example here will result in speech that will magnify Christ and the Gospel – both inside and outside the church.

#### B. “Conduct”

1. One’s behavior is the most profound commentary on one’s heart.
2. “Conduct” [ἀναστροφή] – refers to one’s way of life or the behavior that results from one’s guiding principles of their lives – which in our case is the Gospel.
3. This is the modeling of one’s teaching – “*people will tend to follow how the man lives, not what he teaches.*”<sup>2</sup>
4. Our lives can display the beauty of God’s grace and the power of the presence of Christ – cp. *1 Peter 1:15*.
5. Someone once said: “What you do speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you are saying!”
6. It is essential that how we live backs up what we desire to communicate

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<sup>2</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *1 Timothy*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 173.

about the power of God to save and sanctify – *1 Peter 2:12*.

### C. Compassion – “Love”

1. Excellent servants of Christ are so devoted to the people of God that they devote their whole lives to see them strengthened and edified in the faith.
2. “love” [ἀγάπη] – refers to possessing a genuine, warm interest in the welfare of another – affection that prioritizes the object being loved over one’s own – cp., *2 Corinthians 12:15*.
3. Such love demonstrates devotion to the welfare of the object being loved.
4. No personal sacrifice is too great for such servants – regardless of the visible response.
5. This will be a major element in your desire to see others come to know Christ – we must be engaged in evangelizing if we are to be an example of the believer in “love.”
6. This is the heart of love possessed by Christ Jesus – who loves us into the faith – *2 Corinthians 5:14-15*.

### D. Commitment – “Faith”

1. “Faith” [πίστις] – in this context, refers to the level of commitment and trustworthiness a person demonstrates.
2. In order to set the proper example, one must be “all in” for the cause of Christ – no half-hearted, on-again, off-again treatment of one’s calling to serve Christ – cp. *1 Corinthians 4:2*.
3. Serving Jesus Christ must never be something we do; it must be who we are – our purpose for living is to bring glory to Jesus Christ by serving Him and His Body through our spiritual gifting.
4. You can be half-hearted in your golf game, half-hearted in your fishing pursuits, half-hearted in your book club, soccer team, or company softball team, but you must never be half-hearted in your service to Jesus Christ.
5. We have been saved to serve – both in magnifying Christ in the ministries of edification within the church and in the exercising of Christ’s heart for the lost through your testimony.

### E. Consecration – “Purity”

1. This final embodiment of the demonstration of truth deals with the moral “purity” of your life.

2. A life that will influence others to follow Christ must be free from sexual deviance or compromises.
3. **“purity”** [ἀγνεία] - refers to the quality of one’s moral virtue – not just in the use of your body, but in the recesses of your mind.
4. It describes a person who is “chaste” or “fresh” – someone whose moral quality is untarnished by corruption, indulgence, or defilement.
5. This means that you must strive, through grace, to take more pleasure in the delight God’s Spirit takes in your obedience to Christ Jesus than you take in the indulgence in your sexual satisfaction.

## **So What?**

1. **Are there ways your life gives others the ability to despise you and thereby evade the message you are sharing?**
2. **As we have discussed various matters this morning, in what ways has God’s Spirit addressed how you can be a better example of the believer?**
3. **Would you be willing to talk to someone of your choice over the next week about things you desire to change to be more effective as an example of the believer?**

***Authenticity provides power to one’s testimony.***