

Title: A Mature Church's Leaders Are an Example

Text: 1 Timothy 4:11-16

Every one of us here this morning has experienced the power of example. From our earliest years, watching our parents, older siblings, and even an elementary school teacher. Their example molded us a little bit here and a little bit there.

Like it or not, for good or for bad, the examples we witness in others and our example witnessed by others has a tremendous impact.

Thomas Manton (1620-1677) was an English Puritan clergyman. He was a clerk to the Westminster Assembly and a chaplain to Oliver Cromwell.

He said this about the power of example.

Good examples have a powerful influence upon us, for we are led more by pattern than by precept, especially the examples of those we love, for such we are prone to imitate; but more especially of those who are in nearest relation to us, for there nature sides with grace.

Thomas Manton

"What happens teaches"

Example influences others.

Even though we have never seen God, His example, manifested through Jesus Christ.

And while Jesus didn't come to this earth simply to be an example (He came to rescue us), He did set an example for us who follow Him.

An example of what it means to look like Jesus in a crooked and wicked generation.

Paul is addressing Pastor Timothy specifically.

So, we as elders must really pay attention to what he is saying and I believe it is this.

Main Idea: Leaders - Your Leadership Must Be A Consistent and Powerful Example to the Flock

What does this look like in the life of a leader in the local church?

Three ways from the text and the first is...

1. Lead By Example In How You Act (vs. 11-12)

1 Timothy 4:11-12 (ESV)

Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

Command and teach these things - the things that I have laid out for you in this letter, Timothy.

Paul wanted Timothy to be bold and confident in his teaching of doctrine and in how the church ought to function.

The Lexham Bible Dictionary (Mission)

First and Second Timothy suggest Timothy may be somewhat timid and reluctant to continue in his role as minister of Christ. This reluctance concerns Paul enough to write to him and encourage him to continue and “fulfill [his] ministry” (2 Tim 4:5). As Paul is soon to be martyred for the gospel, he hopes that Timothy will stay the course and fight the fight of faith.

For a young man who struggled with timidity, it would have been a great challenge for him to stand before those who were older than him and preach the word of God. Yet, this is exactly what Timothy was to do. Look again at the text.

1 Timothy 4:11 (ESV)

Command and teach these things.

Timothy was the Pastor/Elder in the church at Ephesus. And as such he held an authoritative position. This is why Paul told him to not **suggest** these things to the church but instead to **command** and **teach** these truths to the church.

I think it is important to note here that Timothy isn't just to command these things. But he is to **command** and **teach** these things. The commands he gives are to be rooted in the teachings of the Scriptures.

So, the authority doesn't come from the position or the individual, it comes from the authoritative Word of God!

Verse 12 is an interesting coaching tip from Paul to Timothy. It starts with a negative and then ends in several positives.

“Let no one despise you for your youth...”

This is an interesting command that Paul gives Timothy because Timothy has no control over the thoughts of others.

But there is something Timothy can do to help mitigate the murmuring of those who might think he is too young for such an important role in the church.

He can be a proper example. And by doing so, he would gain the respect of those he is to shepherd.

This is a good principle for those of you that are younger in the church but desire to serve in the role of elder or deacon.

The principle is simple - "Talk is cheap, put up or shut up."

In other words, demonstrate your maturity in Christ by selflessly serving God and others with all that you have.

You may be young, but when you serve God well, it builds respect in others for you.

Paul gives Timothy five ways in which he can be a Christ-like example to the believers around him at Ephesus.

Speech - talk in such a way that people here Jesus coming from your mouth.

Psalm 19:14 (ESV)

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Psalm 141:3 (ESV)

Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!

Ephesians 4:15 (ESV)

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

Ephesians 4:29 (ESV)

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

Conduct - Act in such a way that they see Jesus living this life through you!

Ephesians 4:22 (ESV)

to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,

1 Peter 5:1-3 (ESV)

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

Titus 2:7 (ESV)

Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity,

Love - in such a way that they understand the self-sacrificial love of Christ.

Matthew 22:37-39 (ESV)

And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Faith - Walk in complete trust like Christ did.

Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Purity - Holy and sexually pure.

"pure from defilement, not contaminated. Purity, referring to chastity." WSNT

Exodus 20:14 (ESV)

"You shall not commit adultery."

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV)

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 (ESV)

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;

Pastors/Elders/leadership - it is critical that we live in such a way that exudes Christlikeness to the flock that the Lord has entrusted to us. None of us are immune and we must be vigilant to walk in righteousness.

It is startling how many pastors have fallen because they ignored these commands.

Ted Haggard - Former leader of the National Association of Evangelicals and pastor of New Life Church, resigned in 2006 after allegations of drug use and a relationship with a male escort.

Mark Driscoll - Former pastor of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, resigned in 2014 amidst accusations of bullying, abusive behavior, and financial mismanagement.

Bill Hybels - Founding pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, resigned in 2018 following multiple allegations of sexual misconduct.

James MacDonald - Former pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel, was fired in 2019 due to financial mismanagement and abusive behavior.

Ravi Zacharias - Renowned apologist and founder of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, was posthumously found to have engaged in sexual misconduct over many years.

Carl Lentz - Former pastor of Hillsong NYC, was dismissed in 2020 due to moral failures, including an extramarital affair.

Jerry Falwell Jr. - President of Liberty University and influential evangelical leader, resigned in 2020 following a series of personal scandals and allegations of inappropriate behavior.

Bill Gothard - Founder of the Institute in Basic Life Principles, faced multiple allegations of sexual harassment and abuse, leading to his resignation in 2014.

John Ortberg - Former pastor of Menlo Church, resigned in 2020 following controversy over his handling of a volunteer who admitted to an attraction to minors.

Tullian Tchividjian - Grandson of Billy Graham and former pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, resigned in 2015 after admitting to an extramarital affair.

Recently, **Robert Morris** and **Tony Evans...**

What in the world?

However, don't lose heart!

There are scores and scores of faithful pastors/elders and other leaders in the churches across America and around the world who are walking in righteousness.

We must be like them and take the warning from Paul seriously.

For those that are younger in the faith, be faithful!

For those older in the faith, encourage those that are younger to walk in righteousness. Be like Paul and disciple them well. They will be responsible for this church soon.

We who are older must release our perceived control and entrust the church to the next generation. Our job is to disciple them so they are ready.

We all, whether young or old must purpose to be an example in our...

Speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.

Consider a young athlete, newly drafted into a professional sports team. Despite being the youngest on the team, his discipline, hard work, and positive attitude quickly earn him the respect of his teammates and fans. He speaks with humility, acts with integrity on and off the field, shows genuine love for his community, displays unwavering faith, and maintains a

lifestyle of purity. His example inspires both young and old to strive for excellence in their own lives.

Similarly, Paul urges Timothy to set an example in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, regardless of his age. Each of these areas reflects the character of Christ and can influence others powerfully.

Those that are younger - step up! Pursue leadership! This is your church too and we need your gifting and service to ensure the survival of this church.

Those that are older - please don't think you are better than those that are younger. Don't despise those younger than you at ABC. Please serve and keep serving.

But also, invest in the next generation who will take over this church. Encourage them. Pray for them. Disciple them.

And did I mention, pray for them?

All of you, be a godly example to those who are watching you. A godly example will give them hope and something to shoot for. Don't give up in this. Do not grow weary in doing good.

Review - Your leadership must be a consistent and powerful example to the flock

Lead by example in how you act

2. Lead By Example In What You Teach (vs. 13-14)

1 Timothy 4:13-14 (ESV)

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.

Paul had every intention to visit Ephesus while Timothy was pastoring there.

I am not certain that desire came true, but in his absence, Paul gave Timothy some more instructions on how best to run Christ's church.

Three crucial activities in particular that Paul thought were a must for the local congregation to participate in...

Public Reading of Scripture - ἀνάγνωσις *anágnōsis*; to know certainly and hence to read, particularly the Scriptures. - WSNT

Exhortation - παράκλησις *paráklēsis*; beseech. The act of exhortation, encouragement, comfort. All of Scripture is actually a *paráklēsis*, an exhortation, admonition or encouragement for the purpose of strengthening and establishing the believer in the faith. - WSNT

Teaching - διδασκαλία *didaskalía*; to teach. Teaching or instruction - WSNT

Paul exhorts Timothy to DEVOTE himself, as the Pastor/Elder of the church, to these activities.

Devote - προσέχω *proséchō*; to pay attention - As a nautical term, it means to hold a ship in a direction, to sail towards. It means to hold one's course toward a place. Stick to it!

Pastor Timothy was to stick to the public reading of **Scripture, Exhortation, and Teaching.**

These are non-negotiables when it comes to running a local congregation.

Why? Because it is this trifecta of knowledge about God that we grow in Christlikeness.

Reading we hear about God.

Teaching we learn about God.

Exhorting we are challenged to follow God.

These three practices must take place in every local congregation to build up the saints...

Timothy is also admonished to pay attention to the gift he has received.

It is interesting to notice that earlier Paul told Timothy to not have anyone look down on his youthfulness.

Now Paul says that Timothy should not look down on himself.

Why? Because God has gifted him through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Some say God had gifted Timothy in the areas of preaching, teaching, and leadership. What we do know is that he was gifted by the Spirit and it took place when the Elders confirmed this gifting when they laid their prophetic hands on him.

We still do this practice today through the ordination process. This process confirms, through the ruling body of elders that the candidate indeed has not only the call to gospel ministry, but the necessary gifting to accomplish the call.

This is all through the Holy Spirit.

Friends, Paul understood well as a biblicist and church planter the absolute importance of what is taught to the congregation.

The church's leadership must focus on...

Reading the bible publically!

Teaching the bible thoroughly!

Preaching the bible passionately!

And the leadership of the church, like timothy, MUST be **gifted** in the **Holy Spirit** and they must use their gifts for the building of the Body of Christ!

Listen to the warning Tozer issues about not knowing and following the Scriptures carefully.

It is astonishing what some people will believe when they get going. They properly hold it a sin to doubt the Bible, so they refuse to doubt anything that is served up along with the Bible, however ridiculous and unscriptural it may be.

If the story has a flavor of wonder about it, these uncritical friends will accept it without question and repeat it in an awed voice with much solemn shaking of the bowed head.

Multiply such people in any given church, and you have a perfect soil for the growth of every kind of false teaching and fanatical excess.

We need to cultivate a healthy skepticism toward everything that cannot be supported by the plain teaching of the Bible. Belief is faith only when it has God's revealed truth for its object; beyond that it may be fully as injurious as unbelief itself.

A. W. Tozer

In order to know the plain teachings of the Scriptures we must read, teach, and exhort them at every church service.

Paul uses the word “devote” and I think this is a good word to use for you and me this morning.

I don't think Timothy is the only one that God wants to “devote” his life and minds to the Holy Scriptures as well as to the way He has gifted us in the Holy Spirit. I believe God wants this for our leaders as well as everyone who is a follower of Christ.

If you are a Christian, you must DEVOTE yourself to reading, teaching and the exhorting of Scripture. You must DEVOTE yourself to the gifting God has invested in you.

Let me give you three ways you can apply this to your lives. There are many, but let me give you three in the context of this local church.

1. When the Scripture is read, exhorted, or taught, ask God to fill your mind with His truth.
2. When the Scripture is read, exhorted, or taught, purpose to listen with ears of application.
3. Determine how God has spiritually gifted you and “Do not neglect the gift you have.”

Review - Your leadership must be a consistent and powerful example to the flock

Lead By Example In How You Act

Lead By Example In What You Teach

3. Lead By Example In Your Dedication To Christ (vs. 15-16)

1 Timothy 4:15-16 (ESV)

Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

The key words in verse 15 are **“Practice”** and **“Immerse.”**

Practice - doing an activity over and over with the idea of continuous improvement.

Immerse - jump in the pool!

1 Timothy 4:15 (LSB)

Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all.

In other words, work and work hard at verse 12...

1 Timothy 4:12 (ESV)

Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

Work and work hard at verse 13...

1 Timothy 4:13 (ESV)

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.

Work and work hard at verse 14...

1 Timothy 4:14 (ESV)

Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.

Timothy is to *“Take pains with these things.”* He is to be *“absorbed in them!”*

Why? Well, remember, Timothy is in his 30’s and so what he lacked in age, he needed to make up for in spiritual progress. So much so that his growth needed to be obvious to all who knew him. Timothy needed to be disciplined!

R.Kent Hughes in his excellent book, “Disciplines of a Godly Man” makes a bold statement...

We will never get anywhere in life without discipline, be it in the arts, business, athletics, or academics. This is doubly so in spiritual matters. In other areas we may be able to claim some innate advantage. An athlete may be born with a strong body, a musician with perfect pitch, or an artist with an eye for perspective. But none of us can claim an innate spiritual advantage. In reality, we are all equally disadvantaged. None of us naturally seeks after

God, none is inherently righteous, none instinctively does good (cf. [Romans 3:9–18](#)). Therefore, as children of grace, our spiritual discipline is everything — everything!

I repeat ... discipline is everything!

Before we move on to verse 16, I have a question for you.

Is your spiritual progress evident to those who know you?

Do people know you are a Christian and is your growth obvious to those who are closest to you?

Do you know how to best tell if you are maturing in your faith?

Are you growing in your love for people and your love for God?

Do people see this in your life?

Paul continues to challenge Timothy in verse 16 - by the way, get a mentor who will tell you what you need to hear, not what you want to hear. This was Paul to Timothy!

Check out verse 16...

1 Timothy 4:16 (ESV)

Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Personal accountability is critical for your walk with the Lord. Paul knew this and thus challenges Timothy.

Yes, Timothy should have people in his life that ask Him the hard questions. He should have accountability partners.

However, we can get past accountability partners if we want to. But ultimately we are responsible for our own spiritual growth.

Timothy needed to watch out for himself. He needed to hold himself accountable.

Yes, accountability is nice, but you are the one ultimately responsible to stay off of pornographic websites.

You are responsible for not sleeping around and committing fornication, adultery and homosexuality.

You are responsible to not be a liar, gossip, or slanderer.

Timothy needed to walk in righteousness and so do you!

Timothy also needed to persevere in the teachings - meaning obeying what the Bible says.

Some Christians look at obeying the scriptures as optional. No way!

Timothy, you and I must pay close attention to the teachings of the Scriptures - meaning we must do what they say! Why?

Paul gives two very powerful reasons. He says, *“for as you do...”*

You will save yourself.

The mark of a true follower of Christ is they receive a new heart of obedience.

Ezekiel 36:26–27 (ESV)

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Our obedience shows our love for the Lord.

John 14:15 (ESV)

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

The public life of the pastor, elder, leader in the church is not to be taken flippantly.

A holy life reveals the new hearted salvation of the pastor/elder, but it also has a profound effect on those under his care.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary (4:16)

Throughout this epistle Paul had been advising Timothy concerning his private life and public ministry. He was to keep a sharp eye on both, persevering in the instructions Paul had offered in the two realms. In so doing, said Paul, you will save both yourself and your hearers. Ultimately only God can save, of course; yet in a secondary sense the New Testament speaks of a person “saving” himself (Phil. 2:12) and others (James 5:19–20; Jude 23). Paul’s words are a pointed reminder of the awesome burden of responsibility that congregational leaders carry.

Jesus brothers, James and Jude rehearse the same sentiment.

James 5:19–20 (ESV)

My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Jude 22–23 (ESV)

And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

Pastors and elders of ABC. Again, we must feel the weight of the responsibility Paul gives to Timothy and to us.

Your personal holiness matters. Not just for you and your salvation, but for those under your care.

You are, as the writer of Hebrews says, *“Watching out for their souls.”*

You and I have the privilege of being used by God to *“snatch people from the fires of hell.”*

Do you feel this enormous weight? Do you appreciate the tremendous privilege?

Elders, we must persist in our calling, for by doing so *you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

Are you dedicated to Christ? Paul was passionate to ensure Timothy was.

Paul admonished to devote his life to all things Christ.

The “dedicated” matador would likely win some sort of prize for sheer absurdity and may be allowed to stand as the uncrowned champion of all those who seek to waste their lives in the most foolish way. But dedication to vanity is not confined to bullfighters. The truth is, dedication of the life to anything or anyone short of God Himself, is a prostitution of noble powers and must bring a harvest of grief and disappointment at last. Only God is worthy of the soul He has made in His own image. To devote our lives to any cause, however worthy, is to sell ourselves short. Not money, position, fame, can justly claim our devotion. Art, literature, music also fall short. And, if God is forgotten, even the loftiest and most unselfish task is unworthy of the soul’s full surrender. Complete dedication unto death in the cause of freedom, for instance, is a touching thing and has given to history many of her greatest heroes, but only the God of freedom should have our “last full measure of devotion.”

A. W. Tozer

Elders, certainly we have our various responsibilities whether it be family, job, church, or other obligations. And these things are not bad, but they must first be done to the glory of God and second, fall into submission to the fact that we are to be absorbed in our walk, or relationship with Jesus.

Our people need to see our dedication to Christ. Don’t take your foot off of the gas.

Keep pursuing Christ with every ounce of energy you have.

When you fall short, confess it to the Lord and thank Him for His **forgiving** grace **and** thank Him for his **transforming** Grace.

But church, don’t think that because the leadership of ABC is called to IMMERSE themselves in their relationship with Jesus that you are off the hook. No way!

We follow the leaders of ABC as they follow Christ.

This is what Paul told the church at Corinth...

After his discussion on Christian liberty, Paul writes these words to the church

1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1 (ESV)

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. **Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.***

This challenge from Paul wasn't just for the leadership, it was for the whole of the Corinthian church.

Therefore it is for us, Allendale Baptist Church as well.

We are all, leadership and congregation alike, to imitate Christ!

We are to dedicate our lives to this because there is no greater use of our time!

Everything we do as Christians must run through the grid-work of this question - How does this thought, word, or action, make me more like Christ.

Why is this so important?

Let me remind you of the words of Paul...

1 Timothy 4:16 (ESV)

Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Is it evident to all in your life that you are a God-fearing Christian?

Would people be shocked to find out that you are a follower of Christ?

If someone were to look at your calendar, would they find intentional time where you...

Spend time with God in personal worship, prayer bible reading, Scripture memory?

Spend time talking to people about the Lord? And leading them to a saving relationship with Jesus?

Spend time making disciples? We have a process to help you with this endeavor.

Spend time faithfully Worshiping God with the congregation week after week. Getting equipped through equipping classes and the preaching service. Getting connected through our Connection group where you can exercise the "one anothers."

Spend time serving Christ in this body as well as in our community.

These are things every believer in Christ is to immerse themselves in.

To be clear, these activities do not save you, but they are a strong indication if you are saved or not.

When we are born again, we become **FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST**.

This phrase clearly says what we are to do to use the time He has graciously given us...

To live like Jesus.

To act like Jesus.

To love like Jesus.

The more we grow in our faith, the more we will look like Jesus.

Elders, we are to lead in this - and our growth needs to be evident to all.

Church you are to grow in Christlikeness as well.

Becoming like Christ is our **endgame**.

How well are you doing in your development?

Review - Your leadership must be a consistent and powerful example to the flock

Lead By Example In How You Act

Lead By Example In What You Teach

Lead By Example In Your Dedication To Christ

Conclusion

Sir Francis Bacon said these wise words regarding example...

He that gives good advice builds with one hand; he that gives good counsel and example builds with both; but he that gives good admonition and bad example builds with one hand and pulls down with the other.

Francis Bacon (Philosopher)

I leave you with this thought. If you were not able to speak, would those you come into contact with know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that you are a follower of Jesus?

If not, today is a good day to seek the Lord's help to change.

People's lives hang in the balance! Are you building up or tearing down with the life and position God has entrusted to you?