

Be an Example

"These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself: and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:11-16).

The Holy Spirit by Paul wrote this epistle to Timothy, who was a preacher of the gospel. The inspired instruction was for him to behave himself in such a way as to not allow his youth to become a stumbling block in his work. He said: "Let no man despise thy youth . . ." Instead he was to be an example of the believer.

Every Christian should be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:13-16).

One becomes an example by his manner of life. He is to live so as to have a good influence upon those around him. What Timothy was told to do as a believer is what every believer should do. He was to be an example in the following ways:

First, be an example in WORD.

That means our language must be an example of one who is a Christian. It includes teaching the word of God and all communication to others. We must speak as the oracles of God. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God . . ." (1 Pet. 4:11). "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). Sound doctrine is the gospel of Christ; the teaching of Christ.

We must guard the tongue because it can cause great damage to others as well as to ourselves. "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (James 3:2-6).

Our words will be a matter of judgment, and will determine where we will spend eternity. Jesus said: "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the

abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:34-37).

Second, be an example in CONVERSATION.

Conversation refers to the manner of life one lives from day to day. Jesus said: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12).

Third, be an example in LOVE.

We must love God above everyone and everything. "And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment" (Matt. 22:37-38).

A Christian must love his brother or he does not love God. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:20-21). "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15). To hate your brother is the same as murder in the sight of God.

Fourth, be an example in SPIRIT.

We must have the right mind or attitude toward God and His word, as well as others. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus . . ." (Phil. 2:5). "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself: lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

Fifth, be an example in FAITH.

This means to be faithful in all things: in teaching the word of God, and being an example of fidelity in doing what is required of us. We are to hold the faith, and defend it against attacks from anyone. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13). We must "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:10). And ". . . faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

Sixth, be an example in PURITY.

We must be pure and holy in body and mind. We should be clean in thought, in life and in actions. This is important to young preachers and to young people.

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Pet. 1:22). "Pure

religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure" (1 Tim. 5:22).

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

We must MEDITATE upon these things and do them. "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:15-16). We should learn and imitate these examples.

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