

"Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." (Acts 4:12)

Almighty Lord, you have raised up many faithful leaders for the work of Christ. We thank you for their tenacity and strength which only comes from you. Continue to raise up leaders for your Church, O Lord, that the good news of Jesus Christ would be spread to the ends of the earth. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.

Introduction

Paul was an older, experienced pastor. Young Timothy was his student, learning to become a pastor himself. The Bible includes two letters that Paul wrote to Timothy. In them, we see the way he taught Timothy to be a good leader in the church.

Read: 1 Timothy 4:6-16

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The Biblical Context

In addition to the letters written by the Apostle Paul to congregations in various cities, Paul also wrote letters to some specific individuals, like Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. These letters from Paul are often referred to as his "pastoral epistles," because he provides personal advice and support to people in specific situations.

Paul first met Timothy on his second missionary journey as he passed through the Greek town of Lystra in Asia Minor — a place he had visited on his previous journey. Timothy's mother and grandmother were already believers who had raised the young man in the faith and had sent him off with Paul to assist the apostle in his journeys.

Paul's letters to Timothy give us insight into the things Paul thought essential to the Christian life, not the least of which is a firm grounding in God's Word.

Discussion Questions

1. In this Bible passage, Paul gave advice to Timothy about what it takes to be a good leader in the Church. What quality and behaviors did Paul encourage Timothy to reflect? What things did Paul tell Timothy to avoid?
2. In verses 7-8, Paul compares practicing a life of faith to an athlete's physical training. Why do athletes need regular and constant training? How is this like being a person of faith?
3. What reason does Paul give for *why* we "toil and strive"? Which would you say is true: Do we earn God's favor by doing good, or do we strive to do good because God has already shown us his favor? Explain.
4. Read the practical things that Paul mentions in verses 11-16. Are these instructions only for church leaders like Paul and Timothy, or do they apply to all Christians?
5. In verse 14, when Paul says that he doesn't want Timothy to "neglect" the gift he has, what is he asking of Timothy? Why would it be wrong for us *not* to use the gifts we are given by God?
6. God gives all of us different skills and talents. What are some of the gifts that God has given to you? How do you (or could you) use those gifts to serve God and do good in the world? What are some new ways of serving that you might be willing to try?
7. Read Philippians 2:19-24, in which Paul wrote about Timothy to the church in Philippi. In his commendation of Timothy, what does Paul say about the young man's character? How does Paul describe his own relationship with Timothy? Why would that kind of recommendation be important in the Church?
8. Why is it important for the Church to identify and raise up the next generation of leaders? What are some of the ways we do this? Do you know a young person you think would be a good Church leader? What might you tell that person?