



First Timothy

Silence Your Critics

Lead by Example

I Timothy 4:11, 12

Lesson Seventeen

Mission Arlington/Mission Metroplex Curriculum



First Timothy

A Study of the First Letter of the Apostle Paul to His Son in the Faith

Silence Your Critics

Paul had given Timothy quite a lot of instruction, and he is not through. He challenges Timothy to “command and teach.” The word command should be understood as passing on from the position of a leader that which the leader has received. In this case, Timothy would know that what Paul has taught him, Paul received from God. The authority to command has to do with passing on what God has said. Read I Timothy 4:11, 12.

Timothy was probably around forty years old when Paul wrote this letter to him. It had been about fifteen years since Paul enlisted him as a helper at Lystra. (Acts 16:1) So, why would Paul be talking about his youth? Well, the fact is that in their day, a person was not considered mature until they reached about fifty years old. The word Paul used, “youth,” actually referred to a person of military age. That is, you were eligible for military service up to forty years old. We might also think of it as Paul remembering Timothy as the very young man who became his helper so many years ago. Several years later, the church leaders made a rule that no one could be a bishop until they were fifty years old when the person would be “past youthful disorders.” People under fifty weren’t experienced enough or wise enough to be a pastor.

How, then, would Timothy deal with the disrespect people would have because of his age? Paul gave him advice which is good for all of us. Timothy couldn’t convince people by his words or reason; he had to do it another way. Paul said that if Timothy didn’t want people looking down on him he should live so that it would be impossible to treat him with disrespect. He could silence his critics by being an example in his behavior.

Before we get into the specifics, let’s think about being an example. Leaders in churches, and everywhere else, lead best by example. We have heard over and over that no leader should say, “Do as I say, not as I do.” Jesus said, “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (Luke 6:31) Paul was urging Timothy to be the kind of leader who does not only do what is right, but what will be right for others to do. And, Paul was not asking anything of Timothy that he was unwilling to do himself. In I Corinthians 4:16 he told the church at Corinth, “I urge you to imitate me.”

Then Paul listed five things that Timothy should do in setting the right example:

First, Timothy was to set an example in *speech*. The kind of speech Paul alludes to here is preaching. Timothy is to be certain that what he preaches is true, right, and demonstrates his maturity. But, this also applies to the speech of Christians who are not preachers. We must all avoid language and ways of speaking that would embarrass us, our Lord and other Christians. In II Timothy 2:16, 17a, Paul told Timothy to “Avoid worldly and empty chatter for it will lead to further ungodliness, and (such) talk will spread like gangrene.”

Second, Timothy was to set an example in *life*. Living is much more than talking. Timothy’s life was to reflect his speech. It is a lot easier to talk the talk than it is to walk the walk. It is not uncommon in our day for leaders to want us to separate their private lives from their public life. However, Paul knew nothing of that. His life was an open book.

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Third, Timothy was to love. This is *agape* love. The Greek word *agape* is much more specific than our word love. You might say “*I love the mountains*” or “*I love ice cream.*” However, a Greek writer would never use the word *agape* for that. *Agape* is real love. It is a commitment to do whatever is necessary to see that you treat the loved one the best that person can be treated, and what you do builds that person up. Paul tells Timothy that he is to demonstrate his maturity by treating everyone the best way he can possibly treat them. Love, is never bitter, resentful and cannot hate. Love is humble and always forgives. It’s too bad that many leaders are out to get all that they can get for themselves and never show humility. They think that being humble (teachable, unselfish, submissive, kind) shows weakness, when actually it shows strength.

Fourth, Timothy was to be the model of faith. Faith in God, and faith in God’s plan will always show people how to have a good life. Paul had already mentioned Timothy’s faith in 1:4, and in II Timothy 1:5, he commends Timothy’s faith which was modeled after that of his mother and grandmother. Faith, like real love, is a gift from God. (See Ephesians 2:8, 9) Faith is linked to a good conscience in I Timothy 1:5, 19. Faith is loyalty to Christ.

And the fifth and final thing Timothy was to do in demonstrating his maturity, be pure. Purity of heart is an absolute necessity for leaders. II Timothy 2:22 says that good behavior in a leader, and good behavior in every believer, comes from a pure heart. In I Timothy 1:5 Paul told Timothy that true love comes from a pure heart (I Timothy 1:5). In Matthew 5:8, Jesus said that the pure in heart are blessed (happy).

Putting it all together, Paul gave Timothy a road map for being what God respected and what his followers would respect. If we look back over the list, we will see that if all leaders behaved this way, we could not only respect them, we could honor them, and would certainly be willing to follow them.

The people at Ephesus would respect Timothy for who he was and what he did. It was not about his age. It is impossible to ignore the good characteristics of a person no matter what their age. And, ***age doesn’t necessarily guarantee maturity or good behavior.***

Timothy was to prove himself and lead by example. That was true then, and it is true now. Leaders earn the respect of those who follow or the followers will soon find another leader.

*Underlined words and phrases are to be used in completing the Student Worksheet.

Lesson Goal: To encourage students to continue spiritual workouts which lead to godliness.

Scripture Memory: “Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.” I Timothy 4:12b



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Student Worksheet—Following Through

Silence Your Critics

- >How old was Timothy when he received the letter we call I Timothy?
- >How old did you have to be in Paul's day to be considered mature?
- >How could Timothy silence his critics?
- >How do leaders best lead?
- >List the five things Paul said would convince people that Timothy was mature.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.

The people at Ephesus would respect Timothy for who he _____ and what he _____. It was not about his _____.

For Memory: "Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." I Timothy 4:12b

How to begin a Personal Relationship with God:

First, believe that the God of the Bible is the true God.

Second, believe that Jesus, God's Son, was sent to earth to die so that you can have a relationship with God.

Third, ask God to forgive your sins in Jesus' name. Jesus' death on the cross paid the price of every sin you commit.

Fourth, ask Jesus to be your Savior and the Lord of your life.