

Being a Good Example

1 Timothy 4:9-13

James L. Hayes, head of the American Management Association, after nearly 40 years in management education, gave the following “**Hints for Getting Along with Workers**”:

- (1) Be people-conscious. Create a climate that will lead to job satisfaction in your company or organization.
- (2) **Tell workers exactly what you expect from them.**
- (3) **Be a good listener.**
- (4) Have a two-way door. Encourage employees to come to your office but also get out to where people work.
- (5) Be patient. Realize that bringing workers along in their jobs takes time.
- (6) Give your employees not only problems to deal with but opportunities to grow.
- (7) Keep your promises. **Credibility creates trust.**
- (8) **Be a problem preventer**, not a problem solver.
- (9) **Tell the truth.**
- (10) Pass the pride along. Show prompt appreciation for good ideas and good performance. ¹

Mr. Hayes’ “*Hints for Getting Along with Workers*” seem very practical to us. In fact, many of these principles could apply to pastors as well. However, God provided a much more authoritative list of His own for how pastors should conduct themselves. In actuality, these requirements for behavior apply not only to pastors, but also to all believers. So let us begin with:

1 Timothy 4:9-11 NAS:

⁹ *It is a **trustworthy** statement deserving full acceptance.*

¹⁰ *For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.*

¹¹ **Prescribe and teach these things.**

Although the Greek culture placed considerable value on physical training, the church placed its faith in spiritual training. Paul expressed basically the same thought in 1 Timothy 1:15 (NAS) as he did in 4:9-11:

¹ Tan, Paul Lee: Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers. Garland TX : Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

Both Paul and Timothy believed that the gift of life promises enjoyment, both now and in the future, for those who believe in Christ and live godly lives. Paul and Timothy both toil and strive **so that people all over the world might hear the Gospel of salvation, accept it, and obtain everlasting life.** They strive and even suffer agonies to **serve God** who is the **Savior of all men**, especially if they are believers. You see God has provided salvation for all people who have ever lived on the earth. However, He only saves those who truly believe in the work of Christ on our behalf.

We are unable to identify the source for the following paragraph in our notes, but we do have a partial reference.

“The *toil and struggle* that accompanies our work each day on the spiritual battlefield in God’s service has a very focused objective which is the privilege and honor of spending eternity with God. Hope grows as we remember the promise of the resurrection. Because Christ came back to life, so will all believers. **All believers from all time who have died, along with those believers living when Christ returns, will live with Christ forever.** Therefore, we need not despair about tragedy and death. God will change defeat to victory. Paul comforted the Thessalonians with the hope of eternal life (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).”²

Timothy is told *to command* (or, to keep on commanding) *and teach* (or, to keep on teaching). Orders such as these apply not only to Timothy himself but also to all the presbyters (leaders and elders), yes, and even to all Christians. He must *command* such things as:

- “*Have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women*” (verse 7)
- “*Train yourself for godly living*” (verse 7).
- “*Nurture yourself on the words of faith and sound doctrine*” (verse 6).
- “*Rely on the living God and on His promise to all who live the godly life and who accept Him by genuine faith*” (verses 8, 9).

Timothy must *teach* such things as:

- “*Apostasy is coming, in the form of asceticism*”³(verses 1-3),
- “*That error is an insult to God and to his work of creation*” (verses 4, 5),

² *New Testament Volume 2*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 384-385.

³ Self-denying way of life: austerity and self-denial, especially as a principled way of life Encarta © World English Dictionary © & (P) 1998-2005 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

- "An excellent minister is one who is nourished on sound doctrine which he transmits to others" (verse 6),
- "The benefit which accrues from godly living is much more rewarding than that which results from physical training" (verses 8-10).⁴

Now we will continue in 1 Timothy 4:12-13 (NKJV):

¹² Let no one despise your youth, but **be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.**

¹³ Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation⁵, to doctrine.

Paul had a pretty good idea that some of the people in the Ephesian church would consider Timothy too young and inexperienced to be as effective as an older more experienced man. Paul told Timothy that he should ignore such talk and lead by following, following God's Word that is, and by being an example of Christ-likeness in what he said, by the way he conducted himself, in loving others, by his spirit,⁶ in faith, and in purity. Continuing in verse 13 Timothy is instructed to read the Scripture to his congregation so that they will come to understand the will of God and what He expects from His servants. Every pastor or minister needs to spend time for himself in the Word of God if He wants to grow personally, listening to God's Word to him and incorporating it into his daily life.

Every believer whose trust and faith is found in the Lord, who receives life and strength from Him, will have the trust and faith and courage to face all situations which life brings their way if he or she draws close to God each day in prayer, and meditates on the Bible, submitting to the Holy Spirit so that he/she can respond to the trials and problems in a godly manner. Only by constant teaching,

⁴ John MacArthur, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 1 Timothy*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 170-181.

⁵ Its primary meaning in the NT is the urging of someone to do something (*Tyndale Bible Dictionary*).

⁶ Human spirits In both the OT and NT, "spirit" is used of humans and of other beings. When used of humans, spirit is associated with a wide range of functions including thinking and understanding, emotions, attitudes, and intentions. Elihu told Job it was spirit in a person, the breath of God, which gave understanding (Job 32:8). "Spirit" is used extensively with human emotions including sorrow (Prov. 15:4, 13), anguish (Exod. 6:9; John 13:21), anger (Prov. 14:29; 16:32), fear (2 Tim. 1:7), and joy (Luke 1:47). A variety of attitudes and intentions are associated with "spirit." Caleb had a different spirit than most of his contemporaries in that he followed the Lord wholeheartedly (Num. 14:24). Sihon, king of Heshbon, had a stubborn spirit (Deut. 2:30). First Kings 22 refers to a lying spirit. The psalmist called persons who have no deceit in their spirits, "blessed" (Ps. 32:2). A person's spirit can be contrite (Ps. 34:18), steadfast (Ps. 51:10), willing (Ps. 51:12), broken (Ps. 51:17), and haughty (Prov. 16:18). Chad Brand, Charles Draper, Archie England, ed., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), s.v. "," WORDsearch CROSS e-book. ALSO: spirit (SPIH-rit) is the part of man that was made to be like God because God is spirit. The New Testament also talks about evil spirits. (Isaiah 26:9; John 4:23, 24; James 2:24-26) See "demons," "Holy Spirit" and "soul.", *International Children's Bible Dictionary*, (Nashville, TN: Tommy Nelson, 1989), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "spirit". "SOUL;" soul (SOLE) is what makes a person alive. Sometimes the Bible writers used words like heart and soul to mean a person's whole being or the person himself. (Deut. 4:29; Psalm 108:1; Matthew 10:28), *International Children's Bible Dictionary*, (Nashville, TN: Tommy Nelson, 1989), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "soul".

repetition, admonition (warning), and life application is it possible to gain a satisfactory knowledge of the Christian doctrine and to make perfect use of it in life.⁷

If you were asked to identify the **single most important quality** of a great leader, what would your answer be? We would say the quality would be **the ability to model a life of spiritual virtue.**

You can “*talk the talk*,” that is you can say the things that sound good, and perhaps be partially successful as a leader. But it is the person who “*walks the talk*,” that is by living what he/she teaches, that is most successful as a leader. A leader who is able to live out his/her faith is demonstrating to unbelievers the qualities that God will provide a Christian leader who is faithful and obedient. In so doing he/she will be able to show others **all the power** God will make available to him/her. If a minister truly lives this kind of life, his congregation will be drawn to him. However, if the minister drinks, smokes, cheats on his wife, and copies his sermons each week from the Village Church website, his congregation may still copy his behavior, but in this instance he may be leading them into Hell.

When it is obvious that a pastor lacks the quality of godliness, his/her preaching will lack the power and credibility that a pastor should be providing his flock. The way a man or woman lives their life is the most powerful sermon they can deliver. And he/she had better be fully able to live up to what he/she preaches.

Ministers must reinforce with their own lives what they say or they may as well not say it.

We can see the importance of presenting a good example frequently in the New Testament. Paul wrote this similar theme to many of the new churches.

1 Corinthians 4:16 NAS:

*Therefore I exhort you, **be imitators** of me.*

Would any of us be able to sincerely say to others, “*Imitate me; live your life the way I live mine*”? According to these scriptures, **we should be able to**--not in arrogance, but by the power of the Holy Spirit, in humility, as a sincere follower in Christ’s footsteps.

1 Corinthians 11:1 NAS:

***Be imitators** of me, just as I also am of Christ.*

Philippians 3:17 NAS:

*Brethren, join in **following my example**, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.*

⁷ Ibid.

Philippians 4:9 NAS:

⁹ ***The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.***

Philippians 1:4-6 NAS:

⁴ *always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all,*
⁵ *in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.*
⁶ *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

1 Thessalonians 1:5-6 NAS:

⁵ *for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also **in power and in the Holy Spirit** and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.*
⁶ *You also became **imitators** of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,*

Did anything jump out at you in these two verses? Because you have just been told the secret to how to be an imitator of Paul and the Lord and how to be someone that others can safely imitate? Through the power and joy of the Holy Spirit.

2 Thessalonians 3:7 NAS:

*For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our **example**, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you,*

Hebrews 13:7 NAS:

*Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, **imitate their faith.***

Now in the passage we are looking at in 1 Timothy 4:12-13, Paul emphasizes five ways that Timothy can be an example to his flock.

First, Timothy was to be an example by his **speech**. Matthew 12:34-37 (NASB):

³⁴ *"You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart."*

I can remember someone once saying, "Before you do something you always think about it first." That makes a lot of sense does it not? So if you think about something good to do and go ahead and do it, you know that you processed that thought in your heart and mind, determined it to be something that would please God, and therefore went ahead and did it. Then also there are those things that a person does which are bad. They too had to think about those bad things before doing them, and then knowing they were bad and

would not please God, went ahead and did them anyway. That I believe is what is classified as sin.

So it would follow that if you fill your mind with what is mostly evil, most of your thoughts and actions will be evil. How do you spend most of your leisure time each day? Do you read, study, and memorize your Bible? Spend time working in and for God's church? Or connecting with friends for good fellowship and wholesome entertainment? Or do you spend most of your time sitting in a bar, watching television, looking at porn, or watching the trash that is on television? Or maybe gossiping about the neighbors, plotting how you can get even with that person who wronged you, or figuring out how to cheat on your income tax? Which of these comparisons would you say would fall into the category of doing and speaking what is good? So when Paul says, "*For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart,*" he is saying that what you put into your mind will find its way out of your mouth. If you fill your mind with what is sinful, sinful words will come out of your mouth. If you fill your mind with what is righteous and with what you find in the Bible, you will say things that are righteous and good. Now continuing in Matthew 12, verse 35:

³⁵ *"The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil.*

³⁶ *"But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.*

³⁷ *"For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."*

A person's speech makes evident what is in their heart. Any type of sinful speech is out of bounds for a man or woman of God. They must also be truthful and honest in all their conversations and dealings.

Ephesians 4:25 NAS:

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.

Any proof of or even suspicion of lying will almost always destroy a person's ability to lead because they are no longer trustworthy. All it takes is one lie for people to then wonder if other things you say are also lies. Absolute honesty is essential for one who speaks on behalf of the "*God who cannot lie,*" and who hates lying.

Titus 1:1-2 NAS:

¹ *Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and **the knowledge of the truth** which is according to godliness,*

² *in the hope of eternal life, which **God, who cannot lie,** promised long ages ago,*

Proverbs 6:16-19 NAS:

¹⁶ *There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:*

¹⁷ *Haughty eyes, **a lying tongue**, And hands that shed innocent blood,*

¹⁸ *A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil,*

¹⁹ ***A false witness who utters lies**, And one who spreads strife among brothers.*

Ephesians 4:29 and 31 forbid angry speech, impure speech, and slanderous words. Such talk comes from an impure heart. In order to be given high marks for being a minister, one's speech must conform to Ephesians 4:29 (NAS):

²⁹ *Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.*

Secondly, Timothy was to be an **example** in his **conduct**.

Not only was he to demonstrate righteous living in the things he said, but he was also expected to demonstrate righteous living by the way he conducted himself in both his professional and private life. A biblical message paired with an ungodly lifestyle is nothing but blatant hypocrisy.⁸ A godly life brings power and authority to a man's or woman's message.

Think about it. Are you more likely to follow in the footsteps of someone who talks a good program and who has great ideas, but never practices them him or herself? Someone who can give you all the reasons for doing something, but never engages in that activity him/her self?

For instance, if you weigh 300 pounds and want to lose weight, whose advice are you going to follow? That of someone who also weighs 300 pounds and tells you to exercise, eat lots of vegetables, watch your calorie intake, and drink mostly water, but who sits down to a meal of pizza, chocolate cake, and three milkshakes? Or would you pay more attention to someone who used to weigh 300 pounds, but is now down to 225 and tells you to eat lots of vegetables, watch your calorie intake and drink mostly water, while you see them eating a meal of broccoli, broiled chicken, a tossed salad, and a tall glass of water? The advice is the same, but which person are you more likely to believe and imitate?

Someone can know everything the Bible teaches, and may be able to explain difficult doctrines and concepts, but if the truths of the Bible have not made a demonstrable difference in how that individual lives his/her life, are you going to pay much attention to what they say? Probably not. That is why Paul instructs Timothy, and all Christians, to ***“practice what you preach.”*** He knows that people will just laugh at someone who talks about what the Bible teaches about how we are to live, but who lives a lifestyle

⁸ Hypocrisy as used here means: “the false assumption of an appearance of virtue or religion.” [*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (Eleventh Edition)*]

that is pretty much the opposite. Paul also knows that people put more stock in the actions they observe than in the words they hear. To use another common phrase, **“Actions speak louder than words.”** People will follow what you do rather than what you say.

Another reason Timothy, and all Christians, are to set an example is that the Christian life is hard. It is filled with challenges.

Immature and weaker Christians need to see how biblical principles are actually practiced in the life of the believer so they have a model to follow.

They learn to pray fervently when they see and hear a mature Christian praying fervently. They learn to be honest in all things when they observe mature Christians being honest even when it is to their own hurt. Immature Christians learn to trust God, when they see how faithful God is to the mature Christian who is trusting Him daily for everything.

We could sum up the meaning of this entire passage by simply saying: Timothy was to be an example of the Christ-filled life to all those in the church.

Third, Timothy was to be an example in **love.**

Biblical **love** is different from what most people would consider love to be in our culture. Biblical love is demonstrated by those **who are willing** to sacrifice their own comforts in order to serve others who are in need.

John 15:12-13 NAS:

¹² *"This is My commandment, that you **love one another**, just as I have loved you.*

¹³ *"Greater love has no one than this, **that one lay down his life for his friends.***

A faithful minister gives freely of his/her time, energy, and material possessions to those he/she is called to serve. No personal sacrifice is too great according to Paul.

Philippians 2:17-18 AMP:

¹⁷ *Even if [my lifeblood] must be poured out as a libation on the sacrificial offering of your faith [to God], still I am glad [to do it] and congratulate you all on [your share in] it.*

¹⁸ *And you also in like manner be glad and congratulate me on [my share in] it.*

Colossians 1:24 NLT:

I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ that continue for his body, the church.

Paul's love for the Church made him feel the pain of suffering all the time.⁹ To use a current phrase, are you are willing to move out of your comfort zone if that is what is necessary to minister to or to help another Christians or to proclaim the Word of God? Would you give up watching the World Series or the Super Bowl in order to help someone in need? Are you willing to answer the phone in the middle of the night to listen to and comfort someone who is depressed and lonely? Or would you give up an expensive meal at a fancy restaurant so that you could help feed the homeless? And are you willing to do these things only to be seen by God, not to receive the applause of people? If so, that is being an example of love.

Fourth, Timothy was to be an example in **faith**. Faith here does not refer to belief, but to faithfulness or dedicated commitment. A good minister is consistently faithful. He does not swerve off the track; he does not deviate from his course.

1 Corinthians 4:2 NAS:

*In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found **trustworthy**.*

This necessary quality in a minister **separates those who succeed** in having a powerful influence **from those who do not.**¹⁰

In our culture so far, we are not threatened with prison for our faith. But many of our brothers and sisters around the world are imprisoned for their faith. Peter and the apostles rejoiced that they were **"counted worthy"** to be beaten and imprisoned for the Gospel's sake.¹¹ We wonder if faithfulness would prevail if we faced threats of beatings or imprisonment for gathering together for worship.

We wonder to what degree the churches in our country would empty out if there were the possibility of being arrested for going to church. Would our commitment be strong enough to withstand such persecution?

The **fifth** quality Paul emphasizes with Timothy is that of **purity**. Timothy is to be an example to others of purity. The Greek word translated "*purity*" refers to purity in a sexual sense. We can think of nothing more damaging to a ministry than sexual impurity. In fact, Paul places sexual purity at the top of his list when discussing the requirements for overseers (bishops or elders) in the Church. Paul later makes reference to this topic in

1 Timothy 3:1-3 NAS:

¹ It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.

⁹ 2 Cor. 1:5-11; 6:4-10; 11:23-29; 12:7-10.

¹⁰ John MacArthur, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 1 Timothy*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 170-181.

¹¹ Acts 5:41.

² *An overseer, then, must be **above reproach, the husband of one wife**, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,*
³ *not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.*

Satan often uses this temptation among pastors because it can have such a destructive effect on a pastor's entire family life, his ministry, and, of course, his congregation. This is so important that Paul later told Timothy:

2 Timothy 2:22 NAS:

*Now flee from youthful lusts and **pursue righteousness**, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*

Anyone who is not able to provide an example of righteousness in those areas has no business in church leadership. *“Since a leader's life sets the standard for others to follow, an unqualified leader inevitably lowers the standard of godliness in the church.”¹²*

We hope and pray that those things that Paul has stressed in the life of a pastor will be understood by every believer to apply to them as well. **Examine yourself:** are you able to ask others to imitate your Christian life? Is your speech wholesome and God-honoring? Do you **“walk the walk”**? Does God's love flow through you to the people around you? Are you committed to remain faithful? And do you live your life in purity? Every believer ministers in the church in some way to others through the spiritual gift each believer is given. If you know what yours is, put it to work, and if you do not know what it is, be sure to be here for next week's message and find out, so you can make using your spiritual gift a top priority.

If you do these things you will receive a reward in Heaven that is equivalent to the way you lived your life on earth. If you do not do these things that God is telling you to do through Paul, you will receive a reward in Heaven that is equivalent to your lack of obedience and faith on earth. In other words, choose obedience and your reward will be great. Choose doing it your way and your reward will be minimal. You might want to compare it to how you may as a child have anticipated Christmas morning. Your parents may have told you that if you were good you would get the bike you wanted, but if you were bad, you would not get it. Imagine how you would have felt on Christmas morning, rushing down the stairs in anticipation of what might await you under the tree, and finding that there was nothing there. It would not affect your being a loved member of the family, but it would also mean living in that loving environment without a bike.

We hope and will pray that your choice is one of obedience to your heavenly parent, God the Father.

¹² Ibid.