

1 Timothy 4:11-15

Instructions to Timothy

Fight, Keep Fighting, Finish!

Due Diligence!



I know all about this respect factor that Paul mentions to Timothy here. When I went to my first church, it was tiny – a startup church, actually – 16 people our first Sunday, averaging 35 – 40 people in attendance 2 ½ years later when I left. But some of those original 16 people despised my youth and inexperience. I could feel it! It radiated off about three of them like a bad odor! Three is a big number in a congregation that small! They didn't listen to me, disrespected me – but not really to my face. It was mostly behind my back. I'd hear about it from others. But they tried to make me a joke! I have no idea why they called me in the first place. I couldn't hide my youth and they certainly knew it was my first pastorate when they called me. I was essentially the same person then as I am now, just without the experience. Listen, a young pastor is such a tender heart. People can destroy a young, insecure, tentative man with disrespect and impatience.



Experience is a good thing, though – no question. If I would have known then what I know now, I believe there would have been a different outcome in that first church. As it was, I quit in frustration and disappointment – wondering if I would ever return to pastoring!

Paul senses that young Timothy was up against the same problem. If no one listens to you, or even if it just the church “bosses” not listening - if people are rolling their eyes at your slightest mistake, what is the use?! Pastoring is about teaching by word and by example. A pastor's time in a church cannot be effective if the congregation takes everything he says and does with a hint of derisive amusement or even with impatience. He either finds a way to turn it around, or puts up with it until he is there long enough to overcome such an attitude, or he leaves and goes elsewhere where he can be effective. The more a pastor is appreciated, the more effective he can be. The unappreciated pastor and the appreciated pastor can say exactly the same thing, but only one, (guess which one), is listened to. That's just the way it is! Paul's instructions to Timothy about this? ***“Don't let anyone look down on you”*** for the wrong reasons – like, simply because you are young. He also seems to be saying that it is up to Timothy to put a stop to it ²

“Don’t let...”, are the words Paul’s uses here. You cannot “let” people run all over you. No one should do that, especially not pastors. That is not the right thing to do. It doesn’t help you and it certainly doesn’t help them to just take it. If someone is being disrespectful and, well, just plain mean, it doesn’t do anyone any good if you do or say nothing and just let it happen. It is up to yourself to stop them! I am not advocating that you lower yourself to act as badly as they are to stop them – no – not at all! I AM advocating for courage, and standing your ground. No one has the right to run anyone else into the ground, to be disrespectful, spiteful, to anyone, and especially not within a church! I am also **not** saying that a pastor, or anyone else, can’t be criticized or corrected, or disagreed with - if it is done respectfully and with a bit of kindness. Listen, the church is to be a place that is to be dangerous for the Devil. A large part of that happens by being **kind** to each other, **patient**, **encouraging**. Nothing is better equipped to render ineffective the schemes of Satan against us! I can just imagine that he grinds his teeth in



frustration when we tell the truth here, but in kindness, because we love each other and are practicing our skills at **SHOWING** love! We **protect** each other, **help** each other, **care for** each other! We **do not try to hurt** each other! In fact, we **do our utmost NOT to hurt** each other. **Church is a safe place!** We **laugh** together! We **cry** together! We **learn** together! We **serve the purposes of Christ** together! We **solve problems** together! We **tear down obstacles/roadblocks/strongholds!** We experience **deep friendship!** We **need each other!** We **keep building together!** We **do not tear down!** We **support!** We **come alongside** and **carry one another’s burdens, heartaches, troubles!** If this is what you signed up for, then this is the place for you. If you didn’t sign up for that and are not ready to contribute everything you are to add to the strength and glory of such lofty goals, then perhaps this is NOT the place for you! But then, doesn’t everyone will say that this is what they want and expect in a church! Yet, churches are falling apart and disbanding at an unprecedented rate because people are not following Christ’s Law of Love – especially in this age of COVID fueled rage and the social justice culture wars! But if love and unity is what you want in a church, then you have to REALLY believe in it – believe that this is the will of Christ for you personally – believe enough to die to yourself – your impulses, your inclinations, your selfish reactions in your interactions with EVERYONE at church!

Please indulge me as I say this. I have to start preparing you, although you must understand that it may be years from now. I have no immediate intentions and will continue with you as your pastor until I think, or you think, that it would be better for me to not be in this position any longer. I just do not know how much longer I will be able to fulfill this role of pastor. I came here at around 37 years old, and I have grown to, at least the beginnings of, old age here, along with many of you who were here when we first arrived. My boys were in 8th grade and 3rd grade, I think! Today they have children that are as old as they were when we first moved to Clintonville! It has all gone so very quickly! There will come a time in the not-too-distant future, when it will be better for this church to have someone younger in this position! In my approach to a Bible text like this one today, I see an opportunity to try to prepare you all to accept your next pastor as you have accepted me! I'm assuming he will be a much younger man. Now, if he is exemplary "*in speech,.. in life,.. in love,.. in faith,.. and in purity*", then honor him, show him respect, listen to him, be patient with him when he has failed, or not done well at something. Few are good at everything, so that is bound to happen. Uphold him, teach him! All of life is learning! Give him time to learn. If he is inherently **dishonest** and proves that he **cannot be trusted**,.. if he is **immoral** ("*impure*"), or **lazy**, and doesn't get the job done, or if he is given to **false doctrine**, or if it becomes clear that he **does not really like people**, or if he **cannot communicate** very well, or if he is on a **power trip/control issues** – then he may be lovingly encouraged to do something else with his life! But if he demonstrates that he loves Jesus and people, and is a student of the word, can communicate well, and if he is humble without being a pushover or cowardly. And if he does not compromise trying to do the right thing – then – I counsel you to be as generous, kind, and appreciative as you possibly can with him and his family, and he will very possibly stay with you for 20, 30 years or more! Then, I believe the peace of God will continue to rest upon this church to bless the next young man who is called to pastor this church, and to bless all of us!



Finally, Paul encourages Timothy to faithfully administer his responsibilities as pastor. He was to read the scripture, preach, and teach. It is the basic 3-point formula to leading a gathering of the church. Preaching and teaching are somewhat different. First, the scriptures should be central. Preaching is **proclamation** – *“Thus saith the LORD”*, combined with **exhortation** – *“What shall we then DO about what the Lord has said!”* Teaching is more the dissemination of information - the who, when, where, why, what of the scriptures. It is also a more thorough explanation of that information. It **connects** and **correlates** different pieces of information. To **correlate** is to explain the nature of that **connection**. Preaching is more of an emotional appeal, while teaching is less so. There is no reason why there cannot be some of both in a sermon. In fact, I believe there should be both. I attempt that in my sermons. I’m not always successful, I think, but it is what I am aiming at. Paul seems to clearly say here that the work of the pastor is to do both. It isn’t one or the other, but both! I have found that some sermons naturally drift more toward preaching, and some more toward teaching, depending on the scriptural text at the center of the sermon, and its topic(s). In my experience, a sermon seems to take on a life of its own most of the time, and you just have to go with it and follow that thread, within reason of course.



Paul concludes by exhorting Timothy to remain faithful in following Jesus and in sharing his gift(s) with his people. We are not told what specific gift Paul is referring to, obviously a pastoral gift, but whatever it is, Timothy is to be diligent in administering it. He is also to be **tenaciously exact** in handling the apostle’s teaching (gospel truth). This is exactly what I would exhort **every** Christ-follower, not just pastors! Follow Jesus faithfully, and an important part of that is sharing your gifts with other believers - that you might encourage them in their faith journey. In doing this, you enrich your own soul and serve Jesus Himself [**Matt. 10:40-42**]! And finally, always stick to the apostle’s teaching! Don’t be distracted from the simple truths of God’s word by anything! We are in this together, and in success, we encourage each other to greater and greater heights of service and devotion. In defeat, we are letting the air out of the tires of everyone. So don’t ever give up! God never will!

