

The Young Teaching the Old 1 Timothy 4:12

Introduction:

1. How many of you are young today? “Young” is a relative term, isn’t it? It depends on who you are being compared to.
2. Paul is writing this book to his son in the faith, Timothy. As we read verse 12, we see that Timothy was obviously a young man. *“Let no man despise thy youth...”*
 - Paul used this term to describe himself, referring to his younger years. Acts 26:4
3. Apparently, Timothy was sent to Ephesus to represent Paul and his apostolic ministry. There may have been some resistance from the church because of Timothy’s youthful age. Paul tells Timothy, “Don’t let them despise your youth.” **Illustration:** When I became pastor, I wanted to look older because of people’s reactions to a 27-year-old being chosen as senior pastor. Now I’m a grandfather, and I want to look young!
 - “*Despise*” means “to think against.” We should never be guilty of judging somebody based on their age. There are people who will not allow somebody younger than them to tell them or teach them anything. This is very sad.
4. Godly wisdom and godly living does not necessarily have anything to do with age. It has to do with your yieldedness and submission to Christ. Godly wisdom doesn’t come from physical age, but it comes from Christ and His Word. Colossians 2:3, 3:16
5. There are older believers that make really bad decisions and do not evidence any spiritual wisdom whatsoever. There are young people that make very good decisions and evidence great spiritual maturity.
6. *“Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers...”* This is the balance. If Timothy did not want people to despise his youth, then he must have been the right kind of example.
 - It would have been useless for him to demand respect. He had to earn it. The same is true of all of us.
7. We need godly role models today, both young and old. If you know Christ today, you need to provide a godly role model to others. How?

First, use gracious words.

1. Paul told Timothy to be an example in “*word.*”
2. Our words are very powerful. In fact, the Bible says that death and life are in the power of the tongue. Proverbs 18:21
 - Your words have the ability to tear down and destroy, or build up and give life. Are your words like a wellspring of life? *“A wholesome tongue is a tree of life...”* Proverbs. 15:4
 - Do your words provide life, strength, and vitality to those around you in everyday life?
3. Put your words to the grace test (Ephesians 4:29). Are you an example of the believers in word? Paul talked about striving over words that have no profit, but he also talked about being “*nourished up*” in the words of faith. Words can be grievous or gracious.

- “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”
Proverbs 15:1
4. Luke 4 records two interesting observations that people had about the words of Jesus Christ.
 - Luke 4:22 states that people wondered at the gracious words that came out of His mouth!
 - Luke 4:32 states that His word was with power!
 - Do you see that balance? Jesus was truthful and confident, yet was gracious. The Bible says that He was full of grace and truth.
 - In the same way, Paul told believers that we are to speak the truth in love.
 5. Do you want to be an example of the believers? Use gracious words.

Second, seek to maintain a holy life.

1. The word “*conversation*” is an old English word that encompasses a person’s entire behavior, not simply the words that come out of the mouth. This makes sense in the context because Paul already covered spoken words. Now he broadens it to a person’s actions and behavior.
2. This word is also used in 1 Peter 1:15. Notice it says “*in all manner of conversation.*”
3. So many times we are tempted to compartmentalize our lives. We act one way at church, a different way at home, another way at work, school, etc. People notice this, and it creates a lack of integrity. Our life does not reflect wholeness and soundness.
 - Our behavior should reflect our Savior’s holiness at all times.
4. Do you want a great verse on how to exemplify consistency and integrity in every area of your life? Read 2 Corinthians 1:12 (a simple, sincere, godly life, motivated by His grace).
5. This will allow us to be examples of the believers. If somebody from your work, school, etc., came in to church and saw you worshiping God, it shouldn’t surprise them!
6. Remember the context of this verse. It is about people of youth. It is so common today for young people to live with loose morals, vile tongues, and to wallow in the filth of this world. What a testimony when young people choose to live holy and magnify their Savior, Jesus Christ. They dare to be different, and shine as lights for others to see.

Third, love fervently.

1. Paul told Timothy to be an example in charity, which is a synonym for love.
2. There is a big difference between love and lust (2 Timothy 2:22). When a young person understands this, people notice, and it makes an impact. This world knows a lot about lust, but little about true love.
3. There are two simple principles that we would be wise to remember:
 - In all your things, love. 1 Corinthians 16:14 (consistency)
 - Above all things, love. Colossians 3:14 (“*The greatest of these is charity*” – priority)
4. Paul constantly desired for believers to have an abounding love – a love that is growing, and maturing, and becoming more Christ-like.

5. It is so easy to get puffed up and to think we are great Christians because we study the Bible, go to church, teach classes, etc. None of those things mean anything at all if we don't love people and love God fervently.
6. Young people, if you can learn at a young age that the real meaning of life is to love God and love people – if you can get that – you will be light-years ahead of most young people. You will lay a solid foundation for your life that will serve you for years to come.
7. *“Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity.”* We need role models today that will exemplify these marvelous fruits.

Next week – Part 2