

1 TIMOTHY 4:11-15

False teaching had distracted the local church in Ephesus from its mission of preaching the gospel and making disciples.

So Paul writes to Timothy and the big message of his letter is: "Sort out the church for the sake of the gospel!"

We've seen a number of ways Timothy is to do that – particularly in chapters 3 and 4 we're told it will involve sorting out the leadership of the church.

The question we've been looking at in chapter 4 is: "What does it mean to be a group of faithful elders?"

Verses 1-6: Faithful elders teach the truth!

Verses 7-10: Faithful elders pursue and value godliness!

In verses 11-15 we're going to see that faithful elders recognise the importance of example, the Word and growth.

"Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress." (1 Timothy 4:11-15)

A. The Importance of Example

"Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity."

1. Normally an elder would be an older man.

Paul says that age however should not be a barrier to leading the church and being a good elder.

Younger men can be godly, mature and able to be elders.

Examples of Timothy and Spurgeon.

2. The character of the elders is so important.

Damage done to churches by leaders who lack the right character to be in that position.

3. Elders are to set an example.

To live lives that are worth emulating, observing and following.

To be a role model in the church and the community is a daunting task.

We need the grace and enabling of God to do this.

4. Five areas we are to set an example in.

Speech – what we say, way we say it.

Conduct – what we do, way we do it.

Love – sacrificial, self-giving love that follows Christ's example.

Faith – as we hope in God, trust His Word, live lives of obedience to Christ.

Purity – primarily sexual purity.

B. The Importance of the Word

“Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.”

1. Elders recognise the importance of God’s Word.

God’s Word brings life.

God’s Word both saves and builds up the church.

2. Elders show that they recognise the importance of God’s Word by devoting themselves to three things.

The public reading of Scripture – God’s Word should be read in our gatherings.

Exhortation – God’s Word should be applied to people’s lives.

Teaching – The truths of God’s Word need to be taught to the congregation.

C. The Importance of Growth

“Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.”

1. The elders should be growing in these areas.

2. The elders’ growth in these areas will be observed.

As they see change, the church will marvel at what God has done.

As they see change, the church is set an example for what should be happening in their own lives.

3. The elders grow in these areas through practice.

As Timothy sets an example and devotes Himself to reading, teaching and exhortation of God’s Word he will grow in these areas.

D. Application

1. We should be daily asking God for His grace to do this role He has called us to.

2. We should recognise that being an elders means we lose some of our privacy – we can’t be an example if we are never seen.

3. We should be making sure that the reading of God’s Word is prioritised in our Sunday morning gathering (this is something that has happened by reading whole chapters rather than a couple of verses).

4. We should be looking for signs of growth in our own lives and the lives of one another and then directing our praise to God for what He has done.