

1 Timothy - Commentaries by Daniel R. Macy

The Christian Shepherd: 2003, Model of the Believers - Part 1, A (4:12)

“Let no man despise thy youth” (1 Tim. 4:12).

The Apostle Paul has an exhortation for his dear son in the faith. But first he makes a plea to those of us who are older. Please don't despise the youth. Give them room to learn, to mature and to grow. Allow them space to develop their gift.

They have a place in the body of Christ. They are a vital part of the assembly of God. Help them develop. Work with them. Encourage them.

Then he turns to Timothy, evidently a young man. His loving command speaks to the heart and conscience of every one of us, regardless of age or spiritual attainments. However, since he addresses his words to a young person, we do well to particularly heed them in our youth, for the habits formed thereby will help us honor the Lord through our lives till He comes.

Models of, Not to, the Believers

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers” (vs. 12).

Notice that the Apostle Paul does not say, “Be thou an example to the believers.” If you have a mango in your hand, it would be ridiculous to think of that mango trying to be an example to the mango tree trying to show the tree or other buds the proper characteristics of fruit to produce. It could never be an example to the tree. But it might well be an example of the fruit of the tree. If the mango is a good example of mango fruit, from that sample in your hand you can tell what color, size, shape, texture and flavor ought to be present in any other fruit from that tree.

And so it is with us as believers. If I set myself up to be an example to you, I take a position that is superior to you. I profess to have mastered whatever it is of which I wish to be an example. I make you focus on me, not on our Lord Jesus Christ, and every time I stumble or go astray, you are bound to do the same.

The Apostle says elsewhere, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children” (Eph. 5:1). He also says to the Corinthians, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). We are safe in following another believer only in the measure in which they are directly following Christ.

Our focus and reference point ought always to be Christ. Then we will be able to be a proper example (or model) of the believers. The Apostle gives Timothy six aspects in which this example should be visible to others. “Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (vs. 12). Let's look at some of the young people in the Scriptures who were living models of these characteristics.

Word Models

“Be thou an example [or model] of the believers, in word” (vs. 12).

Our first example is our Lord Jesus and some words about Him when He was thirty years old. That may seem to be outside the range of ages that we normally associate with young people. However, let us remember that the Lord Jesus is the one person who was perfectly and entirely consistent throughout His whole life. These words could have just as easily been written about Him when He was thirteen or nineteen.

“All bore witness to Him, and wondered at the words of grace which were coming out of His mouth” (Luke 4:22 JND).

What kind of words come out of my mouth? words of grace? words of kindness? words of compassion? words of sympathy? Or are they sometimes words of jealousy? words of bitterness? words of pride?

With the Lord Jesus, His words were always a model. They communicated the grace, compassion, sympathy and tenderness of the heart of God. Even when He spoke faithful words of rebuke to stir the consciences of His hearers, they were perfectly mixed with the love of God so that there never was any suggestion of guile in His words.

When they asked Him, “Who art Thou?” He responded, “Altogether that which I also say to you” (John 8:25 JND). He was absolutely transparent. His words (and His actions) were in perfect harmony with and were a perfect expression of who He was inwardly.

Sadly, this is not always true with me. But, as a believer in the Lord Jesus, I am responsible to be a model with my words a model that faithfully exemplifies the kind of words that came from the lips of my Lord.

D. R. Macy

The Christian Shepherd: 2003, Model of the Believers - Part 2, A (4:12)

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example [or model] of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).

In the last issue we considered the words of our Lord Jesus Christ as a perfect example for a believer. Now let’s focus on the Christian’s conduct.

Conduct Models

“Be thou an example [or model] of the believers... in conversation [or conduct].”

Our example for conduct is a young person named David. He is called a youth at this time in his life (1 Sam. 17:55). He is taken to the royal city—Jerusalem—to play the harp for King Saul. But the king soon becomes jealous of David, for others ascribe more honor to David than to himself (ch. 18:7). Jealousy turns to hatred and wicked plans against the one who risked his life to save the king and his people. Saul decides to try to pin David to the wall with his spear.

Does David have problems? In spite of his success over the giant Goliath success that he clearly attributes to the Lord he’s now in circumstances that are most adverse. What is he going to do? “David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him” (vs. 14).

David’s conduct his behavior was a model of how a believer should live. He acted wisely in every circumstance. How could he do this? Do you wonder how he could maintain a clear mind so that he could act “wisely in all his ways”? Read the rest of the verse. “The Lord was with him.” He lived with the conscious sense of the Lord’s presence with him at all times, and, therefore, he wanted to be careful to do only what pleased Him.

Others, too, observed that the Lord was with David. “Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul” (vs. 12). Did the Lord’s presence with David make Saul desire it too? No, we’ve already read about the treacherous, wicked desires that were brewing in Saul’s ungodly heart. David was not responsible for Saul’s conduct; he was only responsible for his own. Thank God that David’s behavior—even in the midst of the most adverse and difficult circumstances—was a good example not only to those around him, but to us also.

D. R. Macy

The Christian Shepherd: 2003, Model of the Believers - Part 3, A (4:12)

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example [or model] of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).

Love Models

“Be thou an example [or model] of the believers... in charity [or love].”

Let’s look at another young person for an example of love in the life of a believer. We might think that this would be an easy characteristic for which to find models. After all, doesn’t everyone want to be loved? Then we would assume that everyone is just as quick to show love and care for others, right? Not necessarily.

What does the Apostle Paul say about his “own son in the faith,” Timothy? “I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus to you shortly, that I also may be refreshed, knowing how ye get on. For I have no one like-minded who will care with genuine feeling how ye get on. For all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child a father, he has served with me in the work of the glad tidings” (Phil. 2:19-22 JND).

Paul laments the selfishness of many other believers-pursuing their own interests, “not the things of Jesus Christ.” He says that Timothy’s heart displayed a different desire. Timothy cared with genuine feeling about others and how they were progressing in their Christian lives. He served diligently with Paul in the work of the gospel, showing the same genuine care for the souls of the lost. This was true, divine love in action. Here is a model of love that we want to emulate in our lives.

How might I show this love this genuine feeling of care for other brothers and sisters in Christ as well as those who are still not saved? Can I call someone who is not feeling well to say a word of cheer to boost their spirits? Can I help someone with their homework in a subject that they are struggling with? Can I lend a helping hand to someone who is older with a task they are not able to do easily anymore? We could go on and on, couldn’t we, listing many different ways to practically display the love of Christ in our daily lives. Let’s not just list them on paper; let’s practice them. Let’s model divine love through our actions and our words.

D. R. Macy

The Christian Shepherd: 2003, Model of the Believers - Part 4, A (4:12)

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example [or model] of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).

Spirit Models

In previous issues we have considered the words of our Lord Jesus Christ as a perfect example for a believer, David as a good model of a Christian’s conduct, and Timothy as a good example of divine love in action. Now let’s focus on the believer’s spirit. “Be thou an example [or model] of the believers... in spirit.”

In the early days of the church, when the number of disciples was multiplying, they encountered a difficulty. Some of the widows were overlooked in the daily distribution for their temporal needs. To solve this problem, the apostles told the disciples, “Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:3).

One of the young men that they chose was named Stephen. In giving his name, the Spirit of God specifically reiterates the qualifications by which he was known and which specially suited him for this task: “Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost” (vs. 5).

The Word of God says, “A man’s gift maketh room for him” (Prov. 18:16). Also, “They that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 3:13). Stephen clearly exemplified these principles. Being full of the Holy Spirit, he faithfully performed all of his duties as a deacon (a servant), and the Lord opened up other opportunities for Stephen to serve Him. “Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people” (Acts 6:8).

This aroused opposition, as it often does. Some chose to dispute with Stephen, rather than accept the faithful message of Jesus Christ that he proclaimed. But there was something they could not resist—something they had to notice and acknowledge that was different about this young man. “They were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake” (vs. 10).

He was not only indwelt by the Spirit of God, but he was also full of the Holy Spirit. He allowed the Spirit to have full control of his thoughts, his words and his actions. His own spirit was one with the Holy Spirit, and therefore the attitude he displayed as well as the words he spoke all testified to the divine source of power in his life and in his message. They modeled the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ.

D. R. Macy

The Christian Shepherd: 2004, Model of the Believers - Part 5, A (4:12)

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example [or model] of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).

In previous issues we have considered the words of our Lord Jesus Christ as a perfect example for a believer, David as a good model of a Christian’s conduct, Timothy as a good example of divine love in action, and Stephen as a model of a good spirit. Now let’s focus on faith demonstrated in the life of a believer.

Faith Models

“Be thou an example [or model] of the believers... in faith.”

Now we’ll look at the life of Daniel, a young man whose life was characterized by faith. When the Spirit of God first introduces him to us, He calls him a youth (Dan. 1:4 JND). Daniel is one of those who was carried captive to Babylon when King Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem.

Shortly after arriving at the king’s palace, he ordered that Daniel and his companions be given the king’s meat and wine for their meals. It was a test for these youths. To a faithful Jew, this food would be defiling because it had been offered first to heathen idols. Daniel must have had godly parents who had clearly taught him the law of their God. Daniel knew what was right. His faith was solidly anchored in his God. In spite of where he was and who it was that he was now serving, “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank” (vs. 8). He settled the issue first in his heart before God, and with his faith in Him and only Him “he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself” (vs. 8).

The prince of the eunuchs worried that the change in diet that Daniel was proposing might endanger him and his job before the king. Daniel requested that they be tested for ten days. “And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children [or, youths] which did eat the portion of the king’s meat” (vs. 15).

As the Lord had said in an earlier day, “Them that honor me I will honor” (1 Sam. 2:30). God blessed Daniel’s faith. He granted him “favor and mercy before the prince of the eunuchs” (Dan. 1:9 JND). He gave him “knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams” (vs. 17). “In all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them [Daniel and his three friends], he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm” (vs. 20). All this was the result of the firm decision in Daniel’s heart to put his trust in his God and to live by that faith.

Then there’s the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of Daniel trusting his God for the wisdom and understanding to unfold the secrets of the dream in order to deliver God’s message to this powerful ruler. There’s the example of faith in Daniel’s three companions as they went

through the experience of the fiery furnace with the Lord Himself, encouraged, no doubt, by the example of faith that they had witnessed in Daniel. There's the vision of Nebuchadnezzar and the handwriting on the wall at Belshazzar's feast Daniel's faith gave him understanding of God's message for these kings and the courage to proclaim it to them, though it was not a happy verdict for either monarch. And, finally, there's the time in the lions' den, where "God... sent His angel, and... shut the lions' mouths... because he believed in his God" (ch. 6:22-23). All throughout his entire life, Daniel is a marvelous model to us of a believer who lived by faith. "The just shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4).

D. R. Macy

The Christian Shepherd: 2004, Model of the Believers - Part 6, A (4:12)

"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example [or model] of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).

In previous issues we have considered the words of our Lord Jesus Christ as a perfect example for a believer, David as a good model of a Christian's conduct, Timothy as a good example of divine love in action, and Stephen as a model of a good spirit. Now let's see purity demonstrated in a believer's life.

Purity Models

"Be thou an example [or model] of the believers... in purity."

For this last characteristic that we believers are called to model in our lives, we'll consider the young man Joseph. There isn't a more vivid example in the Scriptures of purity in the life of a believer. From his youth, he had a living relationship with God, though his brothers grew to despise him for it. Who can conceive the awful anguish of his soul as he was wrenched from his family through the hatred and cruelty of his brothers, only to become a slave to Potiphar, the captain of the guard in Egypt?

But what we noticed with David in difficult circumstances was true with Joseph also: The Lord was with him and prospered him in the house of his master. Not only did Joseph have the encouragement of the Lord's presence with him through his sore trial; "his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand" (Gen. 39:3). Also, "the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field" (vs. 5).

Just when it seems like life is going so much better for Joseph, able to forget the troubles and sorrows of his father's house, he must face yet another difficulty. This time it came from the wife of his master. She lusts after his body and begins suggesting to him her desire for an immoral relationship.

His response to her enticements is important and instructive for us. "He refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not [is not aware of] what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (vss. 8-9).

First, he stands firm in the convictions of his soul and refuses to give her what her sinful heart desires.

Second, he reminds her that she is his master's wife she belongs to another man, and her desires should be directed toward her own husband.

Third, he says that to give in to her suggestions would be to sin against God. Would it not be sin against his master? Yes, but Joseph lives in God's presence under His eye and he traces the root of sin to its ultimate responsibility. He answers to God for all of his actions, and He does not want to do anything that would displease Him.

Does his answer make her temptations leave? No, they get worse, and one day she tries to force him to give her what her depraved heart craves. What is Joseph going to do now? "He left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out" (vs. 12). He ran away from that morally destructive situation.

We well know that Joseph's stand for moral purity cost him his job and his reputation. His master believed his wife's lies and put Joseph in prison. But there was something that Potiphar could not take away from Joseph: his relationship with the Lord and His presence with him. "The Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.... The Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper" (vss. 21-23).

There are multitudes of morally dangerous situations in the world of our day too. We need to be ready to run away from every one of them just like Joseph. When we do when we model moral purity we walk with God and please Him.

Conclusion

These young men modeled the traits of a believer. The Scriptures include the record of faithful, godly young women too, such as Esther, Mary (the mother of Jesus) and Rhoda. Each one stands as a monument to God's grace and power, for He alone enables any one of us to display these characteristics in our lives. May we each be encouraged in our desire to exemplify what a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is really like through our words, conduct, love, spirit, faith and purity.

D. R. Macy

