

BIBLICAL GUIDANCE ON YOUNGNESS AND OLDNESS

I Timothy 4:12 – 5:2

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

- Thanks for your support, prayers and encouragement for my wife Barb and myself during the past few months . .
- HUMOR: Some definitions of Youngness and Oldness!
- So tonight's message from I Timothy is about matters of age in the church – can anything think of any reason why they asked me to speak on this topic . . . You know, with my 49 years of ministry experience they could have asked me to speak on any of the texts in I Timothy: on worship, church governance – elders and deacons, women in ministry, ministering to widows and the vulnerable, or issues of false doctrine and heresies: but somehow when our young whippersnapper pastors were reading through Timothy, they came to this section on matters of youngness and oldness – and said, hey we should have the old guy talk on this! Now I'm just not sure they were following the biblical instruction here on honoring an older man . .
- Seriously, I am honored to gather all my ancient wisdom of experience gathered from former periods in history to talk to you mostly most younger, still developing and maturing folks about these matters . . .
- Ok, I am serious this time. There really are important issues about age in the Christian community that this text brings into focus. So let's jump in.

CONTEXT:

1. A reminder that this book we have been studying is primarily a letter of instruction in the first century by the Apostle and First Major Missionary Paul to a young man named Timothy who had been a co-worker with Paul on his second and third missionary journeys.
2. Paul Has a Special Influence with Timothy's family.
 - a. Paul may think of Timothy as his spiritual son because he possibly personally had led Timothy's mother and grandmother to faith in Christ on his first missionary journey (A.D. 46-48) when Paul along with his co-worker Barnabus, (Acts 14:6,7) preached the gospel in Derbe and Timothy's home city of Lystra and in the surrounding region.
 - b. Acts 16:1,2 tells us that when Paul returned on his second missionary journey (A.D. 49-52) he found that there was a disciple there named Timothy whose mother was Eunice and grandmother was Lois, and that he was well-respected throughout the region.
 - c. In I timothy 1:5 Paul refers to Timothy's sincere faith, a faith that first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice . . .
 - d. II Timothy 3:14,15 adds that Timothy learned his faith from an early childhood – would be the Old Testament scriptures from his Jewish mother prior to Paul's arrival in Lystra with the gospel.
3. Paul's Affection for Timothy.
 - a. This was a very special relationship – Because Paul referred to Timothy in I Corinthians 4:17 as his son in the Lord that he loved and in I Timothy 1:2 he addresses the letter to his true son in the faith. . . .
 - b. Paul It is mentioned that Timothy's mother Eunice was a Jewish woman who had become a Christian, but his father was Greek and I the obvious implication is that he was not a believer – Perhaps with Timothy having an unbelieving father, this is part of the reason Paul saw himself over the coming years working together as a spiritual father to Timothy. . . .
4. Timothy Becomes Paul's Assistant. Paul then invites Timothy to go with him as a co-worker on the rest of his second missionary journey (Acts 16:3-18:22) and Timothy is with him throughout the 3rd missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:16). We also find he was with Paul supporting him when He was under house arrest in Rome.
5. Paul then put tremendous trust in his younger assistant, giving him challenging assignments as they traveled together.
 - a. Acts 17:4 tells us that when Paul was forced to leave Berea because of opposition, he left Silas and Timothy behind in Macedonia to strengthen he work.
 - b. They then rejoined in Athens (Acts 18:5), but Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to further establish the new believers there and to encourage them. I Thessalonians 3:1-9 refers to the positive encouraging report Timothy later sent to Paul encouraging news about the positive faith of the Thessalonian believers!

- c. He then goes along with Paul as a key worker on Paul's 3rd missionary journey, and later when Paul is in house arrest in Rome, Timothy is there with him offering support and assistance.
 - d. Indeed, On the 3rd missionary journey, Timothy was still loyally working alongside Paul as they traveled hundreds of miles together establishing churches – (Acts 19:22) Paul was sent to Corinth to settle conflicts there as division had taken place and Timothy had little success, so then Paul sent Titus with perhaps a firmer style to settle the unrest there.
 - e. Paul sent Timothy to the Philippian believers to bring back word from this congregation and Paul commends Timothy for his great care for this community of believers. Paul was greatly encouraged by positive reports Timothy sent back and several passages (Philippians 2:19-23; II Timothy 1:4; 3:10) indicate Timothy had great care and passion for these believers.
6. Paul and Timothy had very different styles.
 - a. It seems to me that Paul with his more bold and courageous style, often ran into conflict – where Timothy was more sensitive and relational side and could serve as a peacemaker.
 - b. The indication is that Paul could leave both Timothy in those areas he was chased out of because of his apparently gentler, kinder approach to ministry.
 7. Timothy struggled with fear, timidity and possibly insecurity related to his youth.
 - a. A strength can also often be our weakness. One who has a sensitive kind approach to ministry can be a lack of boldness and fear of rejection, etc. (I know I struggled with this, especially in my earlier years of ministry).
 - b. Biblical hints about Timothy.
 - i. IT IS SUGGESTED IN I CORINTHIANS 16:10,11 that Timothy may have dealt with fearfulness – as Paul urges the Corinthians to receive Timothy again, **assuring him he has nothing to fear as he carries on the work of the Lord** – to accept him and then send him on his way in peace.
 - ii. Also looking ahead in Paul's second letter to Timothy, there are passages that may indicate that he struggled with fear, insecurity and hesitancy:
 1. In II Timothy 2:1 he writes, "You then my son, **be strengthened** in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."
 2. In II Timothy 2:22, he urges that he flee youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace.
 - iii. II Timothy 1:6,7 in writing to Timothy – "For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. **For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and self-discipline.**"
 - iv. In I Timothy 5:23, we find Timothy struggled with frequent illness and stomach ailments, where Paul encourages him not to drink only water, but to drink some wine. May indicated the stress of anxiety in his life but only a speculation.
 8. I share this context in order to better understand why Paul says what he does to Timothy in the first portion of tonight's text. .

A. THE POWER AND STRENGTH AND POTENTIAL OF YOUTH

I Timothy 4:12-16: "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

1. The first application of this text is to Timothy – he is being exhorted to not let his youth hinder him or how others see him.
 - a. Additionally, Paul reminds him that for his youthful witness to be effective, he has to live it out – to set an example in life, love, faith and purity.
 - b. And he specifically encourages Timothy to use the spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit has given him – that were acknowledged when he was set apart for ministry by the laying on of hands – this text says the body of Elders – and II Timothy says

Paul also laid on his hands. And the Spirit spoke through those present affirming his spiritual gifts.

- c. And Timothy is encouraged to work hard and diligently to do the very best he can to live a high standard of action and diligence in ministry – that the lives of those they lead are at stake.
2. The text also applies to our Pastors, Ben Deaver and Dave Geldart, who are just a few years older than Timothy would have been. Not that they necessarily struggle with the same issues as Timothy, but they too are encouraged by this text to set an example . . . and they do with their training and commitment and dedication to the gospel. (More on this later.)
3. As with Timothy, the scripture can speak to all you younger folks here tonight and in Tallgrass Church!
 - a. Don't be afraid or hesitant to serve Christ with boldness just because you are young. .
 - b. This applies to adults and parents. If we want our teens and children to be strong in their faith we have to set strong goals and believe in their spiritual potential.
 - i. We need to have a vision for the potential of youth, not just in music, athletics, education, dance, but also in faith and witness and service.
 - ii. In today's world, we expect our youth to drive at 16, vote on important national issues at 18 and drink alcohol responsibly at 21, but it seems in the church we have very low expectations for the responsibilities of our youth.
 - iii. Parents too often leave it up to the church to educate their children and teens. But the modern church tends to be more entertainment oriented and not have a lot of teaching time or expectations of discipleship. (Positive Example: the Darnells in Lawrence who took their family vacations on mission trips to do disaster recovery or work in inner city food kitchens, etc. – modeling and teaching their children to serve).
 - iv. As a church we need together to figure out ways to engage our youth and to help them achieve greater things for Christ.
4. But another application I want to make is directly to our teens and older children here tonight.
 - a. Don't think of yourselves as too young to do great things for the Lord.
 - b. There are great examples of youth doing amazing things in the world.
 - i. Story of Malala, the young Pakistani girl who the Taliban shot at 14 to stop her from going to school . . . she survives and at 17 receives the Nobel Prize for her work with women's rights for education. She is the best known person in Pakistan! . .
 - ii. Go Fund Me Kids tells all kinds of stories of children and youth making a difference in society with compassion and determination.
 - iii. Youth do amazing things in art and music and athletics.

- iv. We need to believe they can do amazing things for Christ.
 - 1. Tell examples of our youth in juvenile detention centers in Honduras and El Salvador – tell about Sendero where the teen boys have their own church and their leader is referred to as their Pastor. Talk about our Success Academies where youth learn in-depth discipleship and important life skills.
 - 2. Mention the Cookie program started by a young girl who wanted to help an orphan mission in Uganda – children baked and sold cookies at their church and the idea caught on and spread to other churches – over 3 million has been raised thru this program over a few years.
- v. Share that Dylan working with our youth has a vision for a progressive learning program for our children and youth with expectations of what they should learn and be able to do at various ages.

B. USING OUR GIFTS FULLY

Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of Elders laid their hands on you. . . . Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

- a. So yes I am the Elderly Elder on the team, but we have a vibrant, strong in the Lord, team of young leaders here at Tallgrass . . . and this is one of the reason’s I came along for the ride when we started this church – I love being with my younger brothers in the Lord and draw strength from their energy and enthusiasm, etc. And as with Timothy, I expect them to use their gifts fully and to keep learning and serving with passion.
- b. But it also applies to all of us as Co-Ministers of the Gospel.
 - i. We are a community dedicated to the ministry of all believers. I Peter 2:9,10 is one of my favorite scriptures which describes the church as the new Israel – a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that we may declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.
 - ii. Yes our pastors need to lead and they need from us our love and encouragement and honest feedback, etc.
 - iii. But the church today is filled with churches expecting their pastors to be their hired Christians to do all the evangelism, discipleship, hospital visitation, etc. Rather we need to work alongside with an equal responsibility to use the gifts God has given us.

c. INTERGENERATIONAL LOVE IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD.

1 Timothy 5:1,2 – “Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.”

- a. Now we are getting down to why me on this text: Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father! . . . Have some more humor with the older man issue.
- b. **NOTE: I would love to deal with the text on not rebuking an older man harshly – which may be intended for Timothy in the direct application of how he is to confront older men about their divisiveness or false teachings – to do so in love. But it applies to many other biblical texts that are often misunderstood with the notion we can’t speak to others to hold them accountable. But we are to do so – how we do it is the issue. But another sermon for another time.**
- c. The other things about the spirit of the passage is breaking down barriers of age in the church.
 - i. The modern church has become very segregated by age – we have our children’s programs, youth programs and in many churches young adult classes, middle adult, older adult, really old adult classes, etc. . . .
 - ii. Barb and I had the privilege of being in life-group in a new church in Michigan we helped start where we like grandparents to the group and we so enjoyed the young children . . . and the same with our Life-Group now at Tallgrass. We’ve been gone this period of time, but we look forward to being able to reintegrate with the young families that make up the group. Yes, we enjoy older folks like us as well, but I do think it is extremely healthy to have opportunities to intermix with different stages of life. I hope Tallgrass will always keep this balance.
 - iii. We need to find ways to invite younger and older folks into our homes – we need for couples to invite singles and single to feel free to invite couples – we need to speak to others in the church who are not just like us.
 - iv. And celebrate that in the body of Christ, we really are family. We can treat one another with respect and dignity as a close family in Christ. I can tell you honestly this is one of the richest gifts of my salvation – that over 49 years of ministering together in the body of Christ, Barb and I have so many friends all over the nation and for me in Central America – And sometimes I have actually felt closer to some of our Christian friends than our own siblings. We love them too, but Christ enlarges our world so much in Christian community! Don’t take the gift of one another too lightly.
 - v. Life-Groups are huge and a strength of Tallgrass where we do engage with others from different age groups.
 - vi. Dylan indicated to me some of the youth in our church really got excited about their faith involvement at Tallgrass when they went to the ManKamp. (Tell how as a youth, one of my primary memories, thought we went to church all

- the time) was going to the Bluetop Café in Lamar, MO after Sunday evening services when we fellowshiped together – and I felt included and valued as a member of the body.
- vii. One idea floating around is finding ways to engage children and youth in the Central Gathering with Adults, so we are not always apart.
 - viii. We need to explore other ways to be intergenerational and create a spirit of a loving family.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE.

1. Encourage our Pastors with prayer, encouragement, honest dialogue and shared ministry.
2. Parents: Set example and engage your family in using gifts in meaningful ministry.
3. Children and Youth: Believe in yourselves and the strength you have to do important things.
4. Intentionally include those different than you in life groups, activities, personal life, treating all as a father, mother, brother, sister you love.

WHO WE ARE!

- A loving family sensitive to and caring for all. Continue to help our life groups flourish.
- A serving church body making a difference in our neighborhoods and communities
- A community committed to children and youth . . . as Dave says, with so many volunteers that we have to wait in line for a chance to serve.
 - Notes; This is a challenge with us as a new small church with lots of children. But more of us can do more. (Tell about Jerry and Penny Burns, grandparents who served every Sunday in the nursery). Dylan would love to have mentors – tell about the Wamego mentoring program for all students.

BRING UP BEN AND DAVE FOR AFFIRMATIONS AND PRAYER ACKNOWLEDGING THEM AS LEADERS WE BELIEVE IN AND SUPPORT.