

Life, Truth, Youth (1 Timothy 4)

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[0 : 0 0] Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great. He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales. Rather, train yourself to be godly.

[1 : 2 6] For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.

That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe. Command and teach these things.

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, and to teaching.

Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy 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 heroes. And that is a reading of God's word.

[2 : 3 9] Thank you, Moriah. Let's pray as we ask God to help us to hear from this passage. Lord, as we sang earlier, we've decided to follow you, and there is no turning back.

So help us today to see what it looks like to live a life for Jesus through the truth of his gospel, and to be devoted to these things from when we are young.

Help us see how this will ultimately save not just us, but those who hear it around us as well. We pray all these things for the sake of your holy name.

Amen. Amen. We're in a Chinese-y type church, so some of you wear glasses, some of you don't. Some of you, like me, we wear contacts. Can I just ask a very simple question?

How's your eyesight this week? How's your eyesight this week? It's kind of a question in jest because, look, last week we ended chapter 3 of 1 Timothy with a brilliant picture, didn't we?

[3 : 46] Right? Struck by the brilliance of the gospel. Right? Something that would really just blind us if we could see it in all its glory. Right? What did we hear last week?

He was revealed in the flesh, Jesus. Wow. Justified by the Spirit. Seen first by angels and now proclaimed to the nations. Wow. What a sight.

Believed all over the world to be carried up into glory. This was the message preached to Ephesus and then to all the world since then. And you remember that building in Ephesus, right?

That funny temple. You know, it just sits on a hill, but, you know, who cares about it, right? Some people might say that's a brilliant sight. But, no. It's the message of the gospel, right?

The good news of Jesus. What a message for the world. Shinier than any experience. Shinier than any expensive or old building. I mean, think about it.

[4 : 44] If the gospel is like the pinnacle of a building, I don't know. Who's seen the Sky Tower recently? Looks like that, if you've forgotten. If the gospel is kind of like the tip of the Sky Tower, right?

Everyone can see it. People go, wow, right? Well, then God's family, you, the church, we are like the pillars that hold up this good news to the world.

That's the picture that we were left with last week, right? Yes, that's us. You know, we are those kind of sticky-uppy things. A bit dull. Gray sometimes. Maybe scribbled on frequently.

Funnily shapes some of us. And yet, each one of us is critical in the plans and purposes of our living God, who is the Savior of the world, of all who believe.

And so that was the picture we ended with, right? We raise the roof of the gospel, as it were, the glorious gospel. But then, chapter 4 gives way to a bleak reality, doesn't it?

[5 : 44] Because what does it say in your Bibles? Chapter 4, verse 1. The Spirit clearly says that in later times, some will abandon the faith. And so we're reminded, Paul has been addressing this issue of false teaching in the church.

That's why he's writing this letter to Timothy, encouraging him to guard the gospel, because there's false teaching about. And that's been the tone of the letter throughout, right?

And we've heard it from the first three chapters, how important it is to stick to the truth, right? The truth of the gospel, of Jesus. Not to believe in the scams.

But from chapter 4 onwards, there's a shift from what the church as a whole needs to be responsible for, to what Timothy himself needs to be responsible for.

Now, we go from kind of what everyone needs to do in gathered worship to your personal holy life. Paul gets personal from chapter 4 onwards.

[6 : 50] You see that in how he writes, okay? I mean, 1 Timothy 3.14, right? That's where Mariah started the reading. Through to the end of our chapter, Paul starts to say, you, right?

You, Timothy. You in the singular. He actually says you, Timothy, at least 10 times, right, in this passage that Mariah read, right? These things I'm writing to you, hoping to come to you in haste.

Chapter 4, verse 6. If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of the gospel. And, of course, our memory verse this month, right? Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, right?

You, you, you, you, you. Whether you're young in age, whether you're young in name, young in faith, whether you're just young at heart, whether you're more youth adjacent, here is a message for us, for you.

Here is a personal challenge from our Lord about three things, I think, all right? We're going to be challenged in our chapter today about your life, about your truth, and about your youth, all right?

[7 : 55] So, we're going to take a look at chapter 4 of 1 Timothy in two main parts, but keep in mind those three things, life, truth, and youth, all right? Now, have a look at verses 1 to 8, and we're going to see that here, a bit of a challenge about false teaching and living.

Here, we see Paul challenging false teaching and living. Now, here, verse 1 again. The Spirit clearly says that in later times, some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

It's not the kind of way you'd start a message, but this is a personal letter, right? Paul is very frank with his young friend Timothy, and he speaks seriously here, doesn't he? It's serious stuff.

He makes reference even to the Holy Spirit speaking, because the false teaching that's deceiving the church back in Paul's day is not just a surprise.

What? We're so surprised that there's false teaching about it. No. It's been predicted. It's been prophesied, okay? Scriptures, even from the Old Testament onwards, have foretold that in every generation, there's going to be people who distort, misuse the truth.

[9 : 10] I mean, for example, just as a prophet like Isaiah, he can speak in Isaiah 19, 14 of a spirit of error that is deceiving the nation of Israel. Here, the Apostle Paul says that some in the church will end up turning away from the faith.

Literally, to apostatize, right? To turn away, abandon the faith. They're going to depart from the truth of the gospel to chase after godless myths and fairy tales.

They're going to drift towards the teaching of hypocritical liars who have charred consciences. Paul gives Timothy a bit of a glimpse from verse 3 of the specific teaching that they were peddling, right?

They were saying things like, don't marry. Avoid these certain foods. Now, if you know Paul's story, okay, we've heard through Paul's story in other books of the Bible, you might be curious, right?

You'd say, don't marry. Avoid certain foods. Paul, isn't that what you taught us in other contexts? Isn't that how you live, bro? Right? Remember, Paul's single, right? He never married.

[10 : 17] And, you know, we've heard, and he's actually just shared in chapter 3 how even the leaders of our church, overseers and servants, they should practice self-control around food and drink, especially around alcohol.

Isn't that how you live, Paul? Don't marry. Avoid certain foods. I think something more deceptive is going on here in what Paul's saying in verse 3. The original word here behind forbid and order in my translation, the NIV, the word here has a sense of exercising some kind of, like, religious or military control or power over another person.

Once in the Gospels, John said to Jesus, teacher, we saw someone casting demons in your name, and we forbade him. We ordered him not to. We pressed against him and said, no, you can't.

You're not allowed to do that. So I think there's actually something darker going on in what these false teachers were doing. I wonder if you can sense or notice the power imbalance.

Here are some false teachers, and the way they work is that they order followers what not to eat and who not to marry. And this is actually a telltale sign of how cults and extreme religious groups work.

[11 : 37] Okay? Often the issue is not just false teaching. Okay? Someone puts up their hand and says, Jesus, you know, he's not God, right? You can really tell, right, that they're not saying the right thing. Often false teachers are peddling false living and saying, you have to live this way.

Josh, a friend of mine, didn't set out to be a false teacher. Josh, he was actually interested in becoming a missionary. And so in his final year of uni, when an old friend said, oh, I can introduce you to someone, a mentor of mine.

Apparently, he mentored, you know, young people to teach the Bible better. Josh, he was like, yeah, I'm keen. I'll sign up. But let me quote from Josh's story. This is what he says. I mean, initially, this is Josh, I thought the teaching was great.

I was having things explained in such a simple way to me. My teacher could recite everything from memory, from the Bible. Now, there were a few things I'd never heard before, right? God's will, it's found in the Bible, and we must know God's will.

Otherwise, we won't go to heaven. And then they started teaching, lying is okay as long as it is a righteous lie to do God's will. And then they started to say, well, Jesus, there's a second coming, and we must know the prophecies of Revelation in order to know who this second coming Jesus is.

[12 : 59] And little did I realize that Scripture was taken out of context. I was being told a false gospel. Later on, I found out my friend was actually a Shin Chonji member pretending to be learning these things for the first time.

And our Bible teacher was actually an instructor from this group. But all this time, I wasn't able to speak to my family or my friends about these lessons or do any research online as I was told that Satan would get in the way of my learning.

He'd pull me away from these classes and poison my mind. I, says Josh, was in an echo chamber. Now, whether you're in a group like Shin Chonji, a false teaching group, or AIC or some other name, they often call themselves churches of Jesus when they're not.

Look, in high-control groups and cults, this is what happens. There's a high sense of forbidding and control. Your life gradually gets squeezed, right? You want to imagine it like a five-fingered hand gradually gripping every part of your life, right?

They'll tell you what to do with your relationships, your life choices, your bank balance, your education, your work. And before you know it, you're in their grip. And whether these false teachers, Timothy was faced with, were forcing their followers to do certain things, whether through, you know, just bad reading of the Old Testament, happens a lot, whether they were forbidding marriage and foods out of just a fear and suspicion of the culture around them, we don't know for sure.

[14 : 33] But we do know what Paul thinks about this teaching, right? But he says, verse 1, it's deceitful, it's demonic. And within Paul's response to Timothy, look at verse 4, I think we get a wonderful test.

If you can give thanks to God for it, then don't reject it. Okay? Say it again. If you can give thanks to God for it, then don't reject it out of hand.

I look back at the past week and I can give thanks for my marriage, my family, my waterproof jacket when it was super rainy on Wednesday.

I can give thanks to my God-given desires and dreams. Of course, there are some things I can't give thanks for. I shouldn't give thanks for idolizing my marriage.

I shouldn't give thanks for sinful anger in my life or lustful thoughts. Or selfish activities. Whatever I can't in good conscience cover with God's word and prayer and thanksgiving, verse 5 says, you and I should rightly reject.

- [15 : 47] And Paul says in verse 6, he keeps going, if you point these things out, i.e. the false teachings, you will be a good minister. Actually, literally, you would be a beautiful servant or deacon, right, of Christ Jesus.

Of course, there is all kinds of ways to challenge false teaching and living. There are better ways and worse ways. You can be right in what you say and sound like a really annoying person.

You can know what's right and then be too scared to say it. There's always a balance and a tension, isn't there? But I think we do at least need to recapture the idea that to challenge the lies around us is actually a good thing.

It's actually a beautiful service. And in fact, to challenge false teaching and false living, that's not in accord with the gospel, it's an exercise in godliness.

Last month's memory verse, right, train yourself up for godliness is of some value, right? Sorry, physical training is of some value, but godliness is of eternal value for this life and in the life to come. It's a wonderful verse, but here's the context.

- [17 : 05] To challenge false teaching and living, that's an exercise in godliness, right? The godliness of challenging all these godless myths around us has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

There are lots of things we can do of some value, right? Go to the gym and look really buff. Spend thousands of dollars to conceal our age and preserve our looks.

Of some value. But a far more eternal impact is to train yourself to be godly. So are you match fit? Are you camera ready when it comes to challenging the lies of our world?

The false teaching and living that is opposite to the good news of Jesus. That's the first part of Paul's getting personal with Timothy here in chapter 4, right?

He challenges false teaching and living. And then, second half of chapter 4, he then starts to spread true teaching and living, right?

- [18 : 12] Listen again with me from verse 9 to 10. I'll just read that out for us again. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.

And for this we labor and strive, right? That we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.

Hope. Here's a simple, simple question. Where do you put your hope right now? Where do you put your hope? Is it in your studies?

And what you can get out of it? Or what you've got out of it already? Is your hope in a relationship? Or a potential one? Is your hope in a hobby?

Is it in a holiday that's coming up? Is it in something else? The Bible offers a better foundation for your hopes and dreams.

- [19 : 15] It offers the living God, it says, who is the Savior of all people, especially those who believe. Our world, according to Scripture, began beautifully.

Did it not? This world created by a divine work of artistry, right? The maker of the universe, crafting a symphony between God and His image bearers.

Beautiful. He declared it good, good, very good. He made man and woman, called to love and serve and image their maker. But after creation, though, our first parents broke away.

They rebelled against His good word. They were tempted by the evil one. Their disobedience and rebellion led to the fall of humanity.

And their fall became ours too, because every generation has rebelled against the God of the universe, including ours. And every generation since has been searching for hope in the wrong places, not the Savior of everyone.

[20 : 27] And God, in His mercy and justice, has every right to wipe us all out, as we deserve for our sins and our ignorance. And yet, in the living God's loving plan, this is the good news, isn't it?

He prepares, He delivers a Savior to our world. Jesus, born of a Jewish woman, but comes and dies for the whole world, every race.

Part of Israel's royal bloodline, sent to rescue sinners from every language, every tribe, tongue, and people group. His blood atoned for every race.

His death and resurrection has brought a people together for Himself. Those who believe, those who trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior, whether you are 86 years old or 8 years old.

This is the true teaching of the gospel, isn't it? This is the message that deserves full acceptance, Paul says. And it's worthy of our labor and our efforts. There is no hope in false teachers and pretend prophets who will die and face the judgment of God for what they share.

[21 : 46] And yet, there is hope in the living God, Jesus Christ, our Savior, the Savior of this world. These days, it can be hard, I think, to tell what's real and fake, right?

We have been journeying through, I think, the past years, the shock of the fact that AI can generate Studio Ghibli-style art these days, and post it all over Instagram.

So what do you do, right? How do you live in this world? How do you scroll through your feeds and go, that's a real deal, you know, Studio Ghibli scene, and that's not quite right.

It's not easy anymore, right? And you can't just go around memorizing and learning, oh, that's a fake one, I'll memorize that for next time. That's a fake one, I'll memorize that for next time. You can't. It doesn't work that way because there'll just be another fake one, right?

You need to know what the real picture looks like. What a real Studio Ghibli artwork looks like. What a real piece of art looks like. There's no point studying every, I don't know, six-fingered, three-eyed AI monstrosity, okay, creation.

[22 : 58] You need to just look at what the real deal looks like and know it, study it. And so that's why Paul says, in response to false teaching, go to the true teaching.

Go to what's real and true, okay? Don't look at the shadows. Don't look at the fakes or the scams. Come and know the real living Jesus. Can you see the logic that Paul says here?

We've got to keep asking ourselves, right? Am I serving Jesus in what I'm teaching and learning and living? Is my life being changed by Jesus and not some willpower of my own or something else?

That's how we come to verse 12, our memory verse, isn't it, right? We have to come through the gate of the good news. Only from Jesus, the real Jesus, changing our hearts, then we can say, don't let anyone look down on you because you're young.

But set the believers an example, right? In speech and conduct, love, faith and impurity. It's a wonderful verse, verse 12, but of course, notice the connection to last week's talk to leaders and potential leaders, right?

[24 : 14] Remember last week, leadership in the Christian church, mostly about character. Character matters. Just as overseers need to be self-controlled in speech and in their relationships, young Timothy, Paul, is individually saying, you're called to speech and conduct that is loving, faithful, and pure.

But then also notice that these qualities in verse 12 that we see in front of us, precisely what the false teachers lacked. Right? You could spot a false teacher if they go on and on and on about myths and genealogies, chapter 1 told us.

Later on in chapter 6, we're going to hear about them actually using abusive and malicious talk. Paul wants Timothy to keep Jesus the main thing.

How? By spreading true teaching about the Lord and true living in light of Him. And the way to spread true teaching and living about Jesus will include, and must include, verse 13 says, publicly reading, preaching, and teaching the Scriptures.

You see that, right? Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching, and to teaching it. There's not a new idea opening up God's Word and sharing it with each other.

[25 : 43] It's God's idea. It's essential so that we would know the true teaching and living about Jesus. But even so, there are other ways to do all three of these things, right?

It doesn't always happen with one person and then everyone here in the congregation. Sometimes we can do it in smaller groups. Now, some of us have been trying this new idea, right? Well, it's not a new idea.

It's an old idea. Bubbles, small groups where we chat, we pray, we read God's Word together. Why? Why go through all that effort? Because the way to guard the good news amidst all the fake news is to hear it again and again and again through God's living Word.

And Timothy had a gift to teach it and share it, it seems, right? We notice Paul mentioning that here in verse 14, a gift that even others recognize. And so we must come away remembering, although there is so much to do in ministry practically, we cannot be distracted from the ministry of God's Word.

And yet some people can and do use the Bible in twisted and harmful ways. So part of the progress that Paul calls Timothy to pursue is not just to watch his doctrine, what he teaches, but watch his life as well.

[27 : 09] He says, keep going in how you teach and how you live. Why? Because your soul, Timothy, and the souls of others around you are at stake.

Keep going in your teaching, brothers and sisters, but also your living as well. Because the souls of not just you, but others around you are at stake.

Every sorry that you humbly say to your loved ones, every disgusting scene on TV that you quietly skip, every shouting match that you prayerfully avoid, all these matter.

Press on. Because, the Bible says, it points you and those around you to our Savior, the Savior of the world. Watch your life and your truth from your youth.

That's what Paul tells us. Now, Timothy, he lived in a culture where actually age determined how respected you were. We all respect Mrs. Stung when she comes up.

[28 : 18] No one's going to talk over her, right? In our culture, you're older and wiser. We respect you. But then, sometimes in our culture, it flips and, you know, we look at a child and we think, oh no, you're so young.

And we kind of dismiss what they have to say. I think Timothy kind of faced that kind of pressure. And some of you might be able to relate. And perhaps these false teachers were older and more influential in society.

Maybe these were teachers. They were there when the church in Ephesus was born, right? So, oh, okay, you know, their membership number was super low. Oh, wow, we've got to listen to them. But they were false teachers.

But also quite likely is that as a young leader, Timothy is faced with just having to challenge people older than themselves. And in his culture, society, it was hard to do that.

Just as it's very hard to tell my 70-something-year-old dad how to live his life differently, Timothy might have struggled a little bit. And Paul's going to give some specific advice on how to handle this kind of tricky cross-cultural dynamic in chapter 5.

[29 : 30] We'll hear that next week from Pastor Albert. But first, notice, right, he begins, verse 12, with, let no one look down on you. Literally, let no one despise you for your youth.

Don't despise, don't let anyone despise you for your youth, Timothy. Actually, in 2 Timothy, we're going to hear, right, that he remembers, he praises Timothy's mother and grandmother who taught him the faith from his youth.

In the church, being young is not a barrier to being a beautiful servant in the Lord's kingdom. I hope you can see that.

But, at the same time, maybe you're here and being looked down because you are young has been your experience. What? I need to be how old to join this team?

Oh, I wonder if they'll take me seriously this time. But, actually, I probably just don't want to share it. It's not worth it. I get it, right?

[30 : 38] I feel the same pressures, too, right? And I'm youth adjacent, you know, not like youth youth. And, look, you know, for some of you, most of you, you'll know this. The Chinese word for adult actually literally means mature, yeared person.

And you're like, oh, really? It's very tempting in that kind of context to assume if you're young, you have less to offer. But don't be scammed, brothers and sisters. You can be young and mature in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus, remember him? He was 12 when he spoke wisdom and power in his father's house beyond his years could tell. Mary, right, mother of our Lord.

She was most likely a teenager when the angel Gabriel announced God's salvation to her, was going to come through her. Daniel, in the Old Testament, right, was a youth, the Bible says, when he and his friends said no to the pleasures of Babylon and would live for the true king, Yahweh.

In God's universe, your youth is not a barrier to living for the king and proclaiming the truth his gospel brings. Please hear that. Please hear that.

[31 : 54] Our Lord, who said, let the children come to me, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven, calls you, yes, you, to a life lived for him and his glory by the truth told by him in his saving story, even in your youth as you display his maturity.

And so this means as parents and adults and kind of older mentors, aunties and uncles, we have to think beyond us, don't we, here at this church?

Who are the young people among us? Where are they in our church? How will we partner with them? How will we partner with their parents to make disciples of all nations among us?

Can I push us a little bit? If the children of PCBC, we have many, aren't coming to us at 430 English service, maybe you and I need to go to them somehow, some way.

And can I speak to the young ones here? All right? Kids. Let me speak to you from, you know, coming from a not so young follower of Jesus.

[33 : 11] We are so blessed and honored when you guys come to church, when you girls show up as you are. We are so blessed when you trust in Jesus, even when you are young, when you live for Him, even when it's hard.

And so we, all of us, are called to treat you the same as everybody else. you're able to learn from God's Word, yeah? Able to live for God's kingdom, yes.

Able to use the gifts that He's given you to encourage us, to serve us, and one day to lead us as well. So what next for you and for you and for you?

Well, in God's kingdom, in Christ, may it be His life, His truth from your youth, right? Have a look at those guys and girls.

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech and conduct and love and faith and impurity. Yes, we were all young once and yes, God has so much in store for us as we live for Him, as we defend the truth about Him together.

[34 : 38] I'm going to pray and then I'm going to do something a bit different. We're going to respond by singing this verse to music. Hopefully I'll sing it a couple of times and not butcher it and then it would be great if we all joined in.

Thank you. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers.

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers.

In speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. 1 Timothy 4, verse 12.

Nice. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young. Set an example for the believers.

[36 : 29] Timothy 4, verse 12.

In speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. 1 Timothy 4, verse 12.

Let's stand together. Let's have a good. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young. Set an example for the believers.

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young. Don't let anyone look down on you Set an example for the believers.

In speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. 1 Timothy 4, verse 12.

[37 : 56] In speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.

1 Timothy 4, verse 12. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for this wonderful chapter calling us to speak life to others, to live the truth of your gospel from our youth until you call us home.

help us to do this by grace, your strength, your power, that enables us to do it. We pray all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.