

1 Timothy 4:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Analysis

Let no man despise thy youth (Μηδείς σου τῆς νεότητος καταφρονείτω, Mēdeis sou tēs neotētos kataphroneitō)—'let no one look down on your youthfulness.' Kataphroneō means to think down on, despise, scorn. Neotēs means youth. Timothy was probably in his 30s—young for a position of authority in a culture that equated age with wisdom.

But be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity (ἀλλὰ τύπος γίνου τῶν πιστῶν ἐν λόγῳ, ἐν ἀναστροφῇ, ἐν ἀγάπῃ, ἐν πνεύματι, ἐν πίστει, ἐν ἀγνείᾳ, alla typos ginou tōn pistōn en logō, en anastrophē, en agapē, en pneumati, en pistei, en hagneia) —'rather, be an example to believers in speech, conduct, love, spirit, faith, purity.' Typos means pattern, model, example. Six areas of exemplary living: speech (what you say), conduct (how you behave), love (how you relate), spirit (your attitude), faith (your trust), purity (your holiness).

Timothy shouldn't respond defensively to age-discrimination but by exemplary character. The best answer to critics isn't arguing but living so faithfully that character silences objections. Younger leaders earn respect through godly example, not demands for recognition.

Historical Context

Greco-Roman culture highly valued age and experience—elders (presbyteroi) were literally 'older men.' Timothy's youth made him vulnerable to dismissal. Paul's counsel: don't fight for recognition, earn it through exemplary character. In six crucial areas—speech, conduct, love, attitude, faith, purity—let your life speak louder than critics. Character-based authority transcends age.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How can younger leaders overcome age-based discrimination through exemplary character?
2. Why does Paul emphasize being an 'example' rather than defending one's authority?
3. Which of the six areas (speech, conduct, love, spirit, faith, purity) is most challenging for you?

Interlinear Text

μηδείς	σου	τῆς	νεότητος	καταφρονείτω	ἀλλὰ	τύπος
no man	thy	G3588	youth	Let	but	an example
G3367	G4675		G3503	G2706	G235	G5179
γίνου	τῶν	πιστῶν	ἐν	λόγῳ	ἐν	ἀναστροφῇ
be thou	G3588	of the believers	in	word	in	conversation
G1096		G4103	G1722	G3056	G1722	G391
ἀγάπη	ἐν	πνεύματι,	ἐν	πίστει	ἐν	ἀγνείᾳ
charity	in	spirit	in	faith	in	purity
G26	G1722	G4151	G1722	G4102	G1722	G47

Additional Cross-References

Titus 2:7 (Parallel theme): In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,

2 Timothy 2:22 (Faith): Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

2 Timothy 2:15 (Word): Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

1 Peter 5:3 (Parallel theme): Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

1 Corinthians 11:1 (Parallel theme): Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:6 (Spirit): And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

Matthew 18:10 (Parallel theme): Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

Titus 2:15 (Parallel theme): These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

2 Timothy 2:7 (Parallel theme): Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

James 3:13 (Parallel theme): Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

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