

# **Commentary on 1 Timothy 4:6-16**

## **By L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.**

The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **Sunday, March 20 , 2011**, is from **1 Timothy 4:6-16**. Five **Questions for Discussion** follow the *Bible Lesson Commentary*. The **International Bible Lessons** can be read at <http://internationalbiblelessons.org>. At the request of readers, the **Bible Lesson Forum** (<http://biblelessonforum.com>) *Bible Lesson Commentary* now includes for comparison the scripture text from the *New American Standard Bible—Updated (NASU)* and the *King James Version (KJV)*, in addition to the *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)*.

### **1 Timothy 4:6-16 — NRSV**

**1 Timothy 4:6 — If you put these instructions before the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching that you have followed.**

Paul gave several instructions to Timothy in his letter. If Timothy followed them and taught them to the church, he would be a good servant of Jesus Christ. Good servants of Jesus Christ teach the Bible, the written word of God, and instruct people to study and follow the word of God. When preparing to teach, and during the teaching of the Bible, teachers will grow intellectually and spiritually, provided they also follow the sound teaching of the Scriptures, becoming good examples to others.

**7 Have nothing to do with profane myths and old wives' tales. Train yourself in godliness,**

Profane myths are those that teach a way of life contrary to what the Bible teaches. Myths are a combination of fantasy, history, and legend that can affect someone's understanding of what is right or morally permissible, especially when the pagan gods in the myths lead immoral lives. Paul also warns against superstitions about what a person must or must not do that in some way involves magic or believe in unseen powers that have no relationship to God or biblical faith. Instead, we are to do what is right and godly, and make right practices our habitual way of life.

**8 for, while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.**

As important as maintaining physical health is through exercise, people can lose that physical health through accident, disease, the violence of others, natural disasters, and death. Living moral, right, and godly lives according to the Bible when following Jesus Christ day-by-day in the power of the Holy Spirit can help

someone in any situation, even in suffering, even in disasters, and gives a blessed hope of eternal life.

**9 The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance.**

Not only is the good news in the next verse worthy of full acceptance, but so is the entire Bible. We learn from the Old Testament (or the Old Covenant), and the promises Jesus fulfilled, and the promises yet to be fulfilled by Jesus. However, we trust in Jesus and His life and teachings and death and resurrection as presented in the New Testament. We follow Him under the New Covenant, revealed in the New Testament, which gives us a sure hope of eternal life.

**10 For to this end we toil and struggle, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.**

Jesus did not promise us a life of ease. He promised us a cross in this life, if we will carry it. Bearing our cross, teaching the Scriptures, following Jesus, will involve toil and struggle as it did for Jesus on earth. But, we have placed our hope in the living God and that makes life worth living though difficult, for Jesus Christ will save us now and forever, if we place our faith in Him as Lord and Savior.

**11 These are the things you must insist on and teach.**

What Paul wrote Timothy, especially those truths about God, Jesus, and the way to live a godly life in Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit are truths that teachers must teach and insist upon, because these truths are not optional but essential to a biblical Christian faith. They must be preserved and passed on to others because they are indispensable, and our children and grand children must learn them too.

**12 Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.**

Some, like Timothy, begin to serve Jesus, others, and the church at a young age. It is easy for older people to disregard them because of their lack of life experience or spiritual experience. Paul tells how to overcome that – not by arguing or becoming defensive, but by demonstrating in words and life how a Christian ought to live, being a good example to all.

**13 Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching.**

As a young man, Timothy could not go wrong by reading the Scriptures (the Old Testament, and perhaps some of the Gospels, or a collection of writings on Jesus' life and teachings, and some other writings and letters of the apostles). We learn here how important it is to read, teach, and study the Scriptures from what Paul

wrote here. To exhort means to encourage, to actually encourage your listeners to do and put into practice what they have just learned from the Bible. After Timothy read the Scriptures, he was to tell people to take heed, believe, trust in God's word, and adjust their behavior and way of life according to the Bible. He could also teach what Paul and the other apostles wrote in their letters regarding faith, the Christian way of life, and church practices.

**14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders.**

Paul does not exactly say what this gift was that Timothy had received, but he expected Timothy to remember what it was. It might have been any special spiritual gift, rather than a natural gift, that would help him serve others more effectively. We do have an indication here that Timothy was set apart or ordained by a council of elders and not just appointed by Paul himself to the ministry. It appears the gift to Timothy was revealed to him and the elders by the Holy Spirit when the group of elders laid their hands on him in ordination.

**15 Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress.**

Timothy, though young man, had been set apart for doing the work of a pastor primarily – Paul's letter contained sound advice to a pastor for building and maintaining a strong church, where people are committed to Christ, to learning the Bible, and to following the Lord Jesus Christ in the whole of life. By practicing and devoting himself to the work of a pastor, people would see how much Timothy was growing as a pastor and their respect for him would increase.

**16 Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.**

Jesus preached strongly against hypocrisy, especially among religious leaders. To avoid this fault, Paul wanted Timothy to pay attention to how he lived and how he served in the church, so there would be no inconsistency between what he taught about Christ and the Scriptures and the way he led his life. His hearers would be saved by following his example in loving and serving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and he would be also – for Jesus taught that we would know a Christian by the good fruits their faith and love for God would inspired them to bear. Jesus is the truth, and right teaching according to the Bible will reveal the truth about Jesus, which will lead people to salvation.

**1 Timothy 4:6-16 – NASU Text**

“In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. 7 But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of

godliness; 8 for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9 It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. 10 For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers. 11 Prescribe and teach these things. 12 Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. 13 Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. 14 Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. 15 Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. 16 Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”

### **1 Timothy 4:6-16 – KJV Text**

“If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. 7 But refuse profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. 10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. 11 These things command and teach. 12 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. 13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. 15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. 16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”

[Feel free to leave your comments, conclusions, suggestions, and thoughts as a Comment on the [Bible Lesson Forum](#). We can learn from one another.]

### **Five Questions for Discussion**

1. What instructions from the Bible do people tend to neglect today? Why is this so? How might we teach these neglected instructions more effectively in the church today?
2. What does the Bible mean by godliness? Why is godliness so important for a Christian? Why is godliness so important for church leaders?
3. Why must Christians toil and struggle in this life? Should we warn people

before they receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior that their lives in this world may become more difficult—even to the point of bearing a cross and dying? Why or why not?

5. What are the differences between natural and spiritual gifts from God? Why does God give Christians both natural and spiritual gifts?

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