

Prayer

Jesus, You heal the wounds of my body, and I thank You.
Holy Spirit, You heal the brokenness of my spirit, and I thank You.
Father God, You heal the sinfulness of my soul, and I thank You.
Take me, and make me whole, to serve You with my life,
Almighty God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

Prayer Suggestions

Prayer ideas

Pour out your soul to God in prayer for those who have lost everything in the tragedy of natural disaster

On-going prayers

- **Pray for Your home church** *Pray that God will raise up people of wisdom, spiritual discernment and integrity to lead His people*
- *Give thanks for fair-trade products giving producers fair pay*
- *Pray for Haiti and all those affected by the earthquake there*

Meditation

Lord God, Almighty Father, Rock of ages,
Inventor, Designer, Composer and Artist.

Flood all my senses with the ecstasy of life,
And overpower the torrid pain of death.

Irradiate me with the brilliance of light,
And absorb the darkest evils of self.

Energise my enthusiastic soul with love,
And purge the dismal paths of gloom.

Stretch my mind with the intricacies of truth,
And burst the selfish myth of supremacy.

Lord God, Almighty Father, Rock of Ages,
Principal, leader, colleague and aide.

Excite me by how much I truly need You,
And colour me with the hues of godliness.

Bible passage – 1 Timothy 4:11-16

¹¹ Instruct and teach these things. ¹² Let no one treat your youth with contempt, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, faith and purity. ¹³ Give attention, until I arrive, to the public reading of scripture, to preaching and to teaching. ¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift in you, which was given through prophecy and with the laying on of hands of the eldership. ¹⁵ Put these things into practice, be absorbed in them, so that all may see your progress. ¹⁶ Look after yourself and the teaching, and persevere in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.

Bible Study

Review

In this passage, Paul offers heartfelt advice and warm encouragement to Timothy. It is a wonderful mixture of sound advice and support, and it is a good example of how to encourage maturity in others. At the beginning, however, two interesting things come to light, which are essential to our understanding of the whole letter. Firstly, we discover that Timothy is a relatively young man and secondly, he was someone with a specific gift, but the letter does not mention what it is!

If we look at this passage, however, it is possible to work out quite reasonably what the gift is. Paul began his letter by mentioning 'teaching' and Timothy's solemn duty of passing on the truths of the Gospel (1 Tim 1:3) along with a clear instruction to him to teach and train the people of God properly. The previous reading also speaks about instruction, teaching and training (4:6-10). Back in our passage, teaching appears in verse 13, and then after the mention of a special gift in verse 14, Paul says '*Look after yourself and the teaching and persevere in them ...*' (4:16). The close relationship between Paul's concern for Timothy as a person and his teaching, along with all that has been said in the letter makes it possible, if not likely, that Timothy's gift was indeed, 'teaching and instruction'. The more we read of both Paul's letters to Timothy, the more we will find this constant emphasis on teaching, and it is unlikely that Timothy should have a special gift only for Paul to ignore it! In general, Paul was concerned to encourage Timothy in his use of the gifts he had been given.

We can see now why Paul told Timothy not to worry about his age. We do not know whether he was in his twenties, thirties or forties, he was still somewhat younger than Paul and younger than some of the people he was commissioned to lead and teach. In Paul's day, age was venerated, and a group of people tended to defer to the opinion of the oldest person present. Indeed, Paul may have been reaching an age where he would have enjoyed such veneration, but it is clear that Timothy was not. Because of this, Paul was profoundly forward thinking in his insistence that the spiritual gift of teaching and the anointing of a leader by the laying on of hands (4:14) was to be respected by all, irrespective of age. It would have damaged the church greatly if teachers were hampered in their work by people whose opinions were accepted merely because of their age! So when Paul said to Timothy 'let no one treat your youth with contempt ...' he was encouraging him to stand on the authority he had been given; not his own authority of course, but Christ's authority and the authority of the Word and the Spirit.

As we all know, we respect most those teachers and leaders who give an example of godliness through how they behave and go about their work; and this is the simple advice given by Paul to Timothy in verse 12. Advice to set an example of love, faith and purity, presents a challenge to anyone, but it is not an impossible goal. If someone reaches out towards higher goals, then people will appreciate the example given and offer due respect. The goals may not be reached, but leaders who have given up on aiming high not to be trusted or respected.

Within the passage as a whole, Paul gives Timothy wise advice about preaching and teaching, emphasising the public nature of the Gospel and the importance of declaring it openly (4:13). In fact, the Greek of this verse emphasises 'public reading'. Paul also urges Timothy to 'be absorbed' in his ministry, because this will demonstrate his serious intent for the Gospel (4:15); he does not tell Timothy to go and get a hobby or have a holiday to balance out his life, as we might suggest to people in order to advocate 'balance'! Finally, Paul expresses concern for Timothy; 'look after yourself... for in doing this you will save yourself ...' (4:16).

Paul recognises that one who is called to ministry will find that all life becomes intermingled with the call, and there is no separating of private life from work for the Lord. Many clergy today are trained to believe that they must maintain a sense of their own privacy and identity apart from their work for the church. This is difficult territory, but I do suggest this is dangerous and leads to much stress. It is a simplification of what the call to work for the Lord is about, and how it works within the human soul. It is far better to keep Paul's advice to Timothy, to stay close to the heart of God's call in every aspect of life, for in this, the leader becomes whole.

Discipleship

Questions (for use in groups)

1. If you are a church leader, how do you respond to what is said here? Is it exciting or is it frightening?
2. If you are not a church leader, does this passage reflect what you expect of a leader? In what ways?
3. What place does special gifting have within ministry, and how much should be made of it?

Topics covered by this text

- *Leadership within the life of the church*

- *The reading of Scripture and teaching in the church*
- *Keeping close to the call of God*

Personal comments by author

There are many difficult issues raised by this text to do with how people cope with the demands of ministry within the church. I suggest that God's advice that every man woman and child should have a Sabbath of rest is the most helpful starting place for any discussion about how a church leader might find balance in life. One whole day of rest can be organised in a number of different ways.

Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *Read through this passage and see what the Lord is saying to you personally through it. Sometimes the Lord will have a special word from scripture for us, which is something we need to hear at a particular time and place, always be ready to listen.*
- *Pray for your church leaders and make it your business, over a period of a week, to pray about what they do, their gifts, their reputation and preaching skills, and everything about them. Pray for understanding and with understanding.*

Final Prayer

Bless those we love this day, Lord Jesus. Keep them in Your care and protect them from all evil. If there are problems between us, may we be humble enough to let you heal us. When we are at peace together, may we give You the glory. You have given us each other. Praise be to You, Lord Jesus, AMEN
