

## *The Parable of the Gospel Fire*

The night was bitterly cold, and so a huge fire was built. Once the fire got started, huge old logs were placed on the fire. These logs gave off a wonderful heat for many hours. However, when the fire became weaker, it was decided that it would be easier to just place branches on the fire instead of heavy logs. The branches quickly ignited, but somehow the heat was not as effective as before. Small twigs were quickly thrown on top of the fire, but soon everything had turned to ash. Only the original logs had a bit of warmth left in them – but not enough warmth to keep the fire going.

Hear now the meaning of the parable of the fire: The fire is the Word of God. The huge logs are those who have been battling denominationalism and other false doctrines their whole lives, but time is wearing on them. The branches are the ones who pick up the slack, but, for one reason or another, are not as strong as the ones before them. The twigs are the next generation, Christians who are strong, but do not have the resources necessary to justify their sacrifices.

About 6 months ago, a few of us were sitting around flipping through some spiritual magazines from the 1950's and '60's. Although they were instructional, and doctrinally right on, they lacked something. They lacked an appeal to us as 21 and 22-year-olds. The information inside was good, and very useful for a defense in a debate style format. What happens then, when you have a discussion with your friends in the hallway at school? What happens when temptation is standing in your way, and the desire is there to give in? A new generation of Christians has arisen, ones who have access to more tools, more fun, but also more access to sin. What we need is a magazine written for us. A magazine that we can identify with, and use as a tool to connect with other people facing similar struggles.

The uniqueness of this project cannot be understated. There are no official writers set in stone every month, which means that every soul reading this can write something they feel would help other young Christians. All literary styles are accepted, the only stipulation being that, in making sure it stays as youth-oriented as possible, the age of contributors be 30 years of age or under. Near the back, we have a calendar of events, slim right now, but we hope will soon be filled with gatherings, singings, youth lectures, or anything else that will help connect young people with other Christians. If you have an event or monthly bible study that you would like to be included, tell us. Any ideas to make it better or any correspondence can go to [helpusout@thegospelfire.com](mailto:helpusout@thegospelfire.com).

This is your magazine, created by people who were too young to remember the Berlin wall going down, and that were not around for the premiere of Rocky 1. As this continues to improve and grow throughout the years, we hope that it will become an asset for you and all those you share it with. Thank you for your interest, and may God bless you in your efforts.

The Gospel Fire

## "Let no one look down on your youth, but be an example to the believers in speech..."

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As Paul instructed the young evangelist to be an example in several different aspects of living it was natural for him to include Timothy's manner of speech. Obviously, things such as profanity and course jesting were to be foreign to Timothy. As young members of the body of Christ today, we likewise need to remember how important our speech is as we go throughout our lives. Having seen the effects of harsh words to friends, relatives, and brethren, surely we can understand James' observation of how "the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!" (Jam. 3:5) Yet, many of us are still left with questions concerning the proper use of the tongue. What constitutes "profanity" or "course jesting"? Why are certain words "off-limits"? As we seek to answer these questions there is perhaps one point of common agreement for us to launch from; nothing can be used for more good or evil than our speech.

Many Christian teachers have erred in instructing the youth regarding proper speech. We must remember that language and cultures change, but the principles taught in the Scriptures remain the same. Instead of trying to define particular words and terms that are wrong, we ought to reflect on Paul's statement in Ephesians 4:29: "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers." The apostle was not concerned with pointing out every word that was right or wrong, but he rather showed that the only type of speech that was acceptable was speech which edifies! We should be spending our time reflecting on how we are speaking and determine whether or not it is edifying to those around us and most of our questions will answer themselves. Is profanity edifying? How could it be, it is profane! Are course jokes appropriate? Paul said no (Eph. 5:4) because it would not be imitating God (5:1) nor would it "impart grace to the hearers." We as Christians must understand that we have been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20) and should therefore be a living sacrifice in all things (Rom. 12:1-2). Our prayer should be the same as the men of faith before us saying, "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips." (Ps. 141:3)

If we are having problems with our speech we also should recognize that the root of the problem is deeper. As Christ said, "out of the abundance of the

heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34) and we should be taking heed to our heart. Many of us lash out with our words in moments of anger and explain it away as simply a fault that we have, but faults are meant to be overcome. Paul encouraged Titus to set an example as well by using "sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you" (Tit. 2:8). If we are allowing our emotions to rule us then we have yet to understand God's will for our speech. We, instead, ought to be "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (Jam. 1:19). If we will take a moment to think about what we are going to say in response to someone who has frustrated us then we will much more likely use our words wisely. We have all stumbled in word while angry, so we should learn from our mistakes and refuse to let our emotions rule over us. What good has ever come in your life by acting too hastily? When instructing the Colossian brethren on how they should behave towards non-Christians Paul instructs them to "let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (4:6). Speaking without thinking will not produce seasoned speech but anger and bitterness.

Prov. 18:21 states that "death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit." Brethren, let us truly set an example in our speech with Christians and non-Christians alike. May the Lord grant us the patience to think about our speech, the wisdom to select the right words, and the love for one another that will lead us on to true edification.

## “...in Life”

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This past summer some friends and I took a quick road trip down to the beach for the weekend. While traveling back home on Sunday morning, we stopped off the highway to worship with a small congregation of about 20 people. You should have seen the look of excitement and joy that came over their faces as six college-aged kids walked through the door. It was almost like a famous celebrity had just arrived. Immediately, each of the members rushed up to shake our hands, welcome us to the service, and thank us for coming. "Oh we just love having young visitors like you. You all need to come and visit more often!" They were encouraged; they were uplifted; they were excited.

What is it about youth that creates so much energy and excitement in people? All we did was "show up", and yet just by our presence these people were encouraged. Solomon says that, "The glory of young men is their strength"

(Proverbs 20:29). Being young is a gift. We have natural talents and abilities just because of our age. We can stay up longer, we can learn faster, we can adapt more quickly, and we have more energy. Being young allows us to run our bodies night and day, get two hours of sleep, and be ready to start all over again tomorrow.

Whether you realize it or not, people are drawn to those who are young. The spirit and vitality of youth have a tendency to "rub off" on other people. There is a certain innocence that is associated with youth; an optimistic expectation of the future and "what could be" or what "might become of this person". We fill our childhood minds with goals and dreams about the life that lies ahead of us. The future and its possibilities seem limitless. Our youth is a privilege and a gift from God.

Jeremiah 9:23–24 says, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might...But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the Lord". Youth is not something to glory in or boast about "for all these things God will bring you into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 11:9). And as any older person can tell you, the days of youth are few and passing- "All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field" (Isaiah 40:6).

How can we use this "gift" to glorify God and to "be an example in conduct" or "manner of life" for believers and those inside the church (1 Timothy 4:12)? Many young people spend all their time gratifying themselves, looking for the next high and only pursuing the newest form of entertainment. But the Lord is searching for young men and women who will faithfully serve in His kingdom, preparing themselves to be leaders in the church, keepers of the home, and ambassadors for the Gospel of Christ. As young Christians, we can do so much to build up the body of Christ. Your presence alone at a worship service or a Bible study is uplifting. We have the ability to "stir up love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24) every time we attend an assembly of God's people. By saying "hello" to someone new, writing cards to those who are discouraged, or by visiting someone who is sick, we can strengthen the people of God, and build a lasting character within ourselves.

You would be amazed at what a little excitement and enthusiasm can do for a church that has grown cold with routine and indifference towards the worship service. Instead of focusing all our energy towards video games, movies, friends and sports, why not use some of that God-given youthful vigor to serve in His church? As Paul writes, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor

is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). May God bless us with the courage and the desire to serve Him, and to "remember our Creator, in the days of (our) youth" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

## “...In Love”

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We all have people in our lives that love us, whether it be your family or friends, but sometimes we take these things for granted. I have been fortunate to have two older brothers that I call my best friends, not because of blood relation, but because of the reliance that we have on each other to be there for one another in anything. You may tell your parents that you love them, or you may tell your spouse or children that you love them as well. However, when we get down to the base meaning, what does it mean to truly love one another?

Many years ago, Joseph Campbell said, "Love is perfect kindness." Examples in the Bible also give testament to the fact that love is not the warm, fuzzy feeling in the stomach, but rather exhibited by the actions we display. In 1 John 4:10-11, John explains that the love of God was manifested when he sent His Son to be the sacrifice for our sins. He then goes on to tell us that we must love each other as well. The context shows that loving requires action. James would also comment on this by saying in James 2, that faith without works is useless. He gives the example that those who say they will help their brother, but in fact do not, have done no good. What does it profit to say that we love our brothers and sisters without showing it any way?

God did not design us to function alone, but gave us others for support. In Luke 10, Jesus instructed 70 people to go out in front and prepare the way for Him to come. He warned them, "Behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves" (Luke 10:3). Nevertheless, He would give them support in the form of companionship. They were sent out in pairs; one there to help the other, so that neither of them got discouraged to the point of failure. "Two are better than one, for they have a good return for their labor. For if either one of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up." (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

Whether we realize it or not, we have all been helped at multiple points in our lives. None of us could have attained what we had without the assistance of others, yet pride would tell us otherwise. Nevertheless, it is a temptation for us, as young people, to say that we do not have the resources time, or ability to

help others. "I am too young!" we cry, as if our responsibilities in life start at a certain age. Paul would command a young person in 1 Timothy 4:12, to not let anyone look down on him because of his age, but rather be an example "in love." What are we telling our fellow Christians when we neglect someone in need, simply because we "do not think we can?"

One of the greatest comforts to those older than us is to know that the work will continue even after the warriors of this age have passed. We may get up in public worship assembly and lead songs, teach a bible class, or bring friends to worship services, simultaneously encouraging those that have held the faith for 60+ years. However, let us go the extra step in being the saint that God wants us to be. We may not have money, but we have time. Spending afternoons with an elderly person will brighten their day. Mowing the lawn for someone in the congregation that needs it will gain more honor than a thousand touchdowns.

The book of Philippians has often been labeled as the inspired "thank you note," largely due to Paul's affectionate response to the sacrifices they have made for him when he was in need. In Philippians 4, he calls to mind specifically their concern for him "but had no opportunity to show it." They may not have had an occasion to support him, but nevertheless encouraged him in other ways. May we learn from this example as we seek opportunities to exhort those who sit next to us on the pews.

I count it one of my greatest blessings to be surrounded by so many more brothers and sisters than the ones I have as blood relation. They have also stood with me, provided me with guidance and encouragement, and helped me in more ways than I can count. I say with confidence that the same can be said for every young person that is on this planet. Sometimes it may only take a simple word of kindness, but we must look for ways to encourage others. Life is hard, but going through it alone is even harder.

## “...in Faith”

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In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul is addressing the young evangelist Timothy, discussing different aspects of his work, and telling him various attributes in which he needs to be an example. These charges for Timothy give us instruction in being an example. Timothy was a young man that had a particular role to fill, and even though we are not all evangelists, there are principles here we need to apply in

our lives as Christians. Now we will draw our attention to Paul's charge to Timothy of being an example in faith.

Before we can understand what it means to be an example in faith, we must understand what the word example means. According to one definition, an example is "one serving as a pattern of a specific kind." Here is our starting place; here is where we see the basis of what Paul wants for Timothy. Paul wants Timothy to understand he must be an example to those within that congregation and without. He wants him to be a pattern, an instruction manual if you will, in what having faith is all about.

We see now what being an example is, but let us consider the aspect that Paul wants Timothy to be an example in. First, we must understand Paul's use of the word in this text. Paul is telling him I want you to be a pattern of confidence in the Lord and His word. I want you to show the members there in Ephesus what faith in God is all about. Let's consider this illustration. You are a great leader of an army, and it is your responsibility to encourage your soldiers to defeat another army. You must encourage the weak, and embolden the apathetic for your cause. It is your strong desire to instill in your army a faith that will win the victory. Your faith and desire inspires those of your army to have more faith and win the battle. You are doing for your soldiers exactly what faith is defined as: "confidence or trust in a person or thing." Your desire is that they have confidence in the fact that they can fight this battle and be victorious. This is being an example in faith. It is examining the evidence presented and then living strongly based on that conviction. You as that great leader knew based on the troops that you had that you could win the victory. But with the kind of faith that Timothy was to have, that faith must come from God's word (Rom. 10:17). Paul is telling Timothy to be convinced of the truth of God's word, and be an example of what confidence in God is. You instill in those Christians the reality of who God is, and what He is trying to do through them. You show them the faithfulness of God to His word, and the fact that He will always be with them if they follow Him. You give them the boldness and confidence they need to obtain the victory. This is what Paul wanted Timothy to be.

Let us now take the charge given to Timothy and put it in our lives. We as the young people in congregations give a strong boost to those who are older and have fought the good fight. The older members see us as a bright light that will shine the truth of God's word to the next generation. But you may ask, "How can I be an example like Timothy? I'm not an evangelist; I've just been a Christian a few years. What can I do to be an example in faith?"

Let us consider some specific acts that we can do to be examples in faith. Say you hear of a brother or sister who is struggling with their belief in God. It is a

great opportunity to be an example to those not involved in the situation, and also help a fellow member. You then go and talk to him or her about the problem and set up a time weekly where you can study with them about this issue. This is being an example in faith. Also, say you and some friends are invited to a party where ungodly behavior like drinking and fornication might occur. What do you do then? You could be an example to the person who invited you and those with you by defending your faith, and discussing why you don't engage in such activities. Let's look at another example. Can you be an example when you come to services? You can have your bible class lesson prepared, and have good questions to help those who are leading the discussion. You can also make sure that your worship is always with the proper attitude and authority, give an encouraging word to those who are your brothers or sisters, and you can have the proper attitude toward God, His word, and your life. These simple acts are definite ways that we as young people can be examples. We give so much encouragement to those who are older by our attendance and participation in the services. There are other ways of being an example that we could discuss, but these are some ideas of things we can do for the Lord's cause. We do not have to die for the Lord to be an example of faith. We must not overlook the small opportunities we have of being an example in faith. Remember the words of Paul to Timothy, "Let no one despise you youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

Now where do we see in scripture people of our age being an example of faith? It's all good and nice to look at illustrations and to see what we should be doing but it is another thing all together to look into history at someone who has already been an example of faith. There are different examples covered within scripture that we could use as illustrations of being examples of faith. We will consider one from the book of Daniel. In Daniel three there are three young men mentioned. To my understanding these young men, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are around our age. Their faith in chapter three will be our example. Consider the situation; you are in a foreign land with a couple of your friends. The King of which you are servants has decided to make an image which you must bow down to. There was no "religious tolerance" or acceptance of other religious beliefs when the music is played. It was simple, you worship the statue or you and all who do not worship it die. For a pagan this wouldn't be a problem but you are Jew in a foreign land. You know that the statue is an idol and is nothing more than something you could make a house out of. This is an inanimate object of no eternal value to you. You know of the command and you are traveling with your friends then you hear the sound of the music..... what do you do? Do you bow down to save your life? It was a violation of the 10 commandments to worship anything else but the true and living God. What is of

more value, your spiritual life or your physical life? You decide to resist the command of the King. He takes you in and explains the situation and offers you another chance. What do you do this time? You know if you refuse to obey this time that you will be cast into a fire and be in agony until you eventually die from the fire. Would your response be like our examples of faith? Daniel 3 verse 16ff: “Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. “If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. “But if not, let it be known to you, O King, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.” Consider what has just happened. They spoke back to the King of the world at this time, and said they would not worship these things. Wow, what amazing faith! What would you do if that was your situation? What if you had already seen two of your friends burned up in the furnace before you? Would you still have faith in God? This is a real and shocking situation we have discussed. This is what it means to be an example in faith! What a pattern for us to follow!

## “...In Purity”

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As the first issue draws to a close, we look once again at our subject: “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers” (I Timothy 4:12). We have looked at many areas in which young Christians can be examples to others. Now let’s look at the subject of purity.

Purity is a central theme in the Bible. In II Corinthians 11:3, Paul says, “lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ” (II Corinthians 11:3). From the very beginning, Satan has tried his best to complicate the plain, simple, and pure teachings given to mankind from God. Contamination of something pure is only takes one impurity. Satan added one simple, three letter word to the commandment of God and the commandment was changed completely. Eve did what God told her not to do and was punished, even though she was deceived. Since the beginning of time, God’s word has stood in stark contrast to Satan’s lies.

How do we keep ourselves pure? The psalmist also asked the question, “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word”

(Psalms 119:9). Living according to His statutes can keep us pure. Living a life pleasing to God is described as being “in the light” and those “in darkness” are those who defiled themselves with the cares of this world (I John 1). We only have two choices in this life. We are going to serve God or Satan. We are going to be pure or sinful.

This could be the reason why the path of purity is described by Jesus as “narrow” and “difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:14). With Satan’s control of the media, the young are in more danger than ever before. Sometimes for the sake of fitting in, we allow ourselves to listen to music with bad language or watch a movie with friends that contain a number of sinful situations. We can see why Paul had the fear he had because often these subtle temptations are paid for by our parents. The choice not to engage in these contaminating influences may isolate you and you may lose some of your “friends,” but take courage!

God has promised that you can endure anything Satan chooses to throw at you! In I Corinthians 10:13, God promises that you can overcome all temptations because He provides the way of escape. Living according to God’s laws will cause you to be sanctified from those of the world (John 17:17). Those who live in darkness do not like the light because “everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God” (John 3:20–21).

With so many people around us who living immorally, living purely will cause you to shine even brighter! The older generation will take courage when they see the youth that are examples of purity. Your good example will encourage those who are older and all those who “ride the fence” between light and darkness to draw closer to God. Remember, fire does not lose any of its brightness by lighting another fire.