

The Articles of
Shane Millard

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...In Faith

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!

-January 2008

Getting Involved

How many times have you asked the question, “How can I help the Lord’s work?” For people of a younger age that are spiritually-minded, this is a question that will come up from time to time. Young people are interested in helping the Lord’s work and we have an energy and zeal that we will not have in later years. But, one thing we must have as a part of our zeal is knowledge. How can I use my zeal and enthusiasm in a way that God wants for his people? How can I get involved in my local congregation? The first thing we need to realize is that this is a wonderful attitude! We need workers in the Lord’s church who are fired up about the idea of helping others. Now, let’s put that attitude into some specific duties that we can do.

Young people have the great ability to encourage people by their desire for the truth. Use that to your advantage! The older members of our congregations do not expect great, amazing, super-human, things from us. How are some ways I can get involved in the services of the church? Let us begin with the young men. Young men have the ability to get involved in the worship services of the congregation. They can read scripture, lead songs, lead prayers, and give invitations. Now as soon as I write that, someone is thinking, “But Shane, those duties make me nervous, and I don’t want to make a fool of myself.” My friend, I was in the same place not long ago. I started participating in worship at young age, and as I grew I assisted in different parts of the worship. What I am encouraging you to do is to start small. The reading of scripture most of the time is less than a minute, and you will not be expected to read like James Earl Jones your first time. Remember that the other members are encouraging you and they want you to do well! Now let’s move into some more general activities in which both men and women can be involved. How about helping out in a Bible class? Or getting involved in the cleaning and repair of the building? There are other activities that can be done by people our age, we just have to seek out the opportunity! Let’s take a closer look at Bible classes. Bible classes are for all ages, and it is great to get more people involved who can learn how to teach Bible classes. Keep in mind you do not have to be a renowned Bible scholar to teach a Bible class to two and three year-olds. What they need are basics that you should be familiar with. Also, get paired up with someone that is more experienced in teaching Bible classes and they can help you learn. Do not teach a Bible class all on your own unless those who are older agree to it. Keep in mind that because we are younger we are to respect those who are older. May we keep this attitude of willingness ever before us and I hope this encourages you to get involved in the services the church offers.

Let’s move on to helping needy members of the congregation. Different ways we can do this are all over if you look for them. Get with someone older and go visit one of the shut-ins or one of the older members. They come to life when someone our age comes to visit them. Ask around and see if you can help babysit for someone who needs it, or clean a yard of a older member. These are all acts that need to be done and they should never be looked down upon! Be a servant to your fellow members! In John 13:4-17, Jesus teaches His disciples about serving one another. He gets up from the table and

prepares himself to wash the feet of the disciples. This is definitely not one of the first tasks I would have done. You mean I have to clean those nasty, dirty feet? Jesus shows His humility in this story. The Creator of the world lowers Himself to the point of cleaning the dust off of His creation! What an amazing example of service. But, what does that mean for me, Shane? It means that we are all servants that should desire to help those in need, especially our brethren (Gal. 6:10). Go and ask how you can get involved!

Finally, one of the greatest and most rewarding ways you can get involved in your local congregation is by talking to your friends about the gospel. I know that sounds like a big task, but let's analyze it for a moment. In school (junior high to college), we write papers, take tests, give presentations, and who knows what the teachers will come up with next! We are capable of using our bright, knowledgeable minds to learn the Bible! We have the capacity to understand the truth of God's word just like we can understand the history of the United States. We have such brilliant minds in school but when it comes to God's word how do we stack up? My point is that we can learn God's word, and we can teach God's word. Find a way that you can teach the gospel to your friends. Get a book that shows verses for a specific topic, talk to them about the church where you worship and what it's trying to do, and invite your friends to services and Bible studies. These and more are all ways that you can be involved in spreading God's word as a young person! What a great and wonderful task the Lord has given us that we can be involved in the teaching of the gospel! You cannot expect to communicate truth like a preacher, or have the knowledge of an elder who has been studying for 40 years, but you can do something!

What we need in the church today are people who want to get involved. We need people who will do their part (Eph 4:11-16). Young people are in a pivotal part of their lives in regard to helping others. They give so much encouragement to the older members, and they have so much contact with non-Christians! I hope this has given each of us a greater desire and practical ways to get involved in the work of God. To the work!

-February 2008

Why Be Spiritually Minded?

Who among us hasn't heard "you need to be more spiritually minded?" We all have heard it at some point but do we fully understand what's being said? When people want us to be spiritually minded they're not saying to be a religious nut, or a superhuman Christian, they are wanting us to focus on spiritual things. This is a good intention, but many times we might not understand the specifics of being spiritually minded.

Being spiritually minded is the one thing we have to be able to understand and have down in our lives as Christians. Romans 12:1-2 reads *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."* In this text Paul tells us about a transformation that comes from being spiritually minded. The word conformed reminds me of watching my mom make Jello. She would prepare the Jello, and then pour it into a mold. After a few hours, out would come a Jello race car. The Jello was conformed to the shape of the mold. Paul is saying not to allow yourself to be put into the mold of the world, but rather be changed by renewing your mind. The word transformed goes back to the word metamorphosis. Just as a caterpillar undergoes a complete transformation when it becomes a butterfly, sinful man can become what God wants by renewing his mind. When Paul speaks of renewing our minds, he is saying we are to adjust our will to match God's. Paul gives us everything we want as Christians, and it's through a change in mindset.

In order to renew our minds and become transformed by the word of God, we must first know and understand it. The reason we study is so that we can understand what God's desires are for our lives. But, the cost of being spiritually minded is paid in the amount of reading, study, and application we do. In Psalm 119:104 it reads, *"Through your precepts I get understanding, Therefore I hate every false way."* The writer tells us that we get understanding from knowing God's law. When God shows His will in scripture we can understand what He wants. Also, it is not enough to only understand the will of God. We must also transform our lives. The psalmist says that we get understanding from God's will. This understanding leads us to hate every false way. Through knowing God's will, then we are compelled to obey it.

In Genesis 39 is the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife. Here is a situation in which many young people could find themselves. Joseph is seduced, but Joseph does not give into the temptation - why? Genesis 39:9 reads *"There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"* How did Joseph know it was a sin against God? Joseph knew it was sin because he knew God's will, and because of that he resisted the temptation. He would not conform to the world, but He was transformed by adjusting his thoughts and will to those of God's.

As Christians we must have a change of focus and we change it through obedience to God's word. Having a change of thought will lead to a change in attitude and result in a changed life. Knowing God's will, Joseph had an attitude of obedience. This allowed him to react in a godly way, thus transforming his will to that of God. May we always keep in mind the powerful thoughts of Psalm 119:11: *"Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You."*

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