

"LIVING THE GODLY (TEENAGE) LIFE"

(1 Timothy 4:6-12)

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**[PROP NEEDED: Video interviews of Sr. High answering the question  
"What does it mean to be a Godly teenager in today's world?"**

[LaGrange First U.M.C.; 5-15-18]

--I--

1. Read Text: 1 Timothy 4:6-12 and Pray.
2. The teenage years of life have always been among the hardest and most difficult to get through.

A--Our bodies change, we experience intense feelings and emotions we didn't know we had (and often don't know what to do with), and we begin to be expected to act "grown up."

B--And while this has been the case throughout history, I believe that *today's* teenagers (especially those who are trying to live a Godly teenage life) are having to deal with pressures and issues (like gun violence) not faced by their counterparts of the past. <sup>1</sup>

3. Well, today on Confirmation Sunday, we're here not only to celebrate & congratulate our youth who've completed Confirmation studies and are making the conscious choice to profess their faith in Jesus Christ, but also to be reminded (not only as youth, but also as adults) what it takes to live a Godly life in the midst of a ungodly world.

A--In Verse 12 of today's scripture, the apostle Paul gives advice to his younger partner Timothy (probably in his late teens) about what it takes to live a Godly life in *that* day and time, and his words *then* are appropriate for *today's* teens (& all of us), as well:  
*"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young. Instead, set an example for the believers through your speech, behavior, love, faith, & by being sexually pure"*

B--Yet, how do we do all of this? How do we live a Godly life in today's ungodly world?

C--To help answer that, I want to share the answers that our Sr. High youth (along with our Youth Minister CJ Lord) shared with our Confirmands in a video interview that they did with me several weeks ago... **[SHOW VIDEO INTERVIEWS (Time 3:22)...]** <sup>2</sup>

D--Without repeating these word for word, let me highlight a few things in these that we *also* find Paul emphasizing in *his* advice to Timothy about what it takes to live a Godly life in the midst of an ungodly world (whether as teens OR as adults).

--II--

4. First of all, both Paul and our teens essentially said that it will take **COURAGE**.

A--Matt talked about the temptations today “*not to do the right thing*”, Georgia talked about the temptation to “*judge others*” just because they don’t think or believe or act like we do, and Sarah talked about the importance of accepting others even if they’re not just like us -- all saying, I think, that it takes courage to say “no” to peer pressure and to those who want us to judge others who aren’t like us.

1--Now, that’s not just good advice for *teenagers*, but for ALL of us! After all, courage isn’t the *absence* of fear, but the gutsy confrontation *of* it -- of being willing to stand up for the things we know are right & good & Godly, in spite of how unpopular and "uncool“ that stand might be appear to be.

2--Some of you may know that next Saturday, neo-Nazis are planning a rally in Newnan.

- (a) And while its certainly their *right* to do that, I hope I don’t have to remind those of us who *claim* to be Christian that there is simply no place in the body of Christ for any view that espouses, encourages or allows hatred, prejudice, or violence against other people, *regardless* of our political bent or persuasion (whether from the left *or* the right),
- (b) The notion that some people are inherently *superior* to others is blatantly antithetical to the teachings and ministry of Jesus.

3--Now, that’s not a popular view with some; and others mistake what I’ve just said for “politics”. Yet, the gospel of Jesus is *full* of what some considered in that day & time to be “politics,” & courage in the midst of ungodliness means being willing to stand up for what is right & Godly, even if it’s unpopular.

B--Paul puts it this way to Timothy in Verse 10: "*We work and struggle for this: ‘Our hope is set on the living God...’*" -- in other words: being a follower of Jesus means there *will* be some “work” and “struggle” along the way, but that we can endure it all because of God’s presence (i.e., our “*hope set on the living God*”) in our lives. <sup>3</sup>

C--And I don’t know about you, but I’ve found that the BEST way to get and maintain a sense of God’s presence is through ***an active Prayer/Devotional*** life (Ben Ivey talked specifically about this several times in his comments).

1--Teenagers (and adults, for that matter), what is your *prayer* life like? Do you take time to talk and *listen* to God on a regular basis?

2--If you don’t, you’re leaving yourself vulnerable to peer pressure because you may not possess the *courage* you’ll need to stand firm against evil & temptation

5. A second thing I think today's testimonies and scripture tell us we need to live a Godly life is **DISCIPLINE**.

A--Matt talked about this in terms of "*Focusing and paying attention, knowing that there's something in the future that God wants us to do,*" and Ben described this as "*being consistent with (our) faith*".

B--In the last half of Verse 7 Paul says, "*Train yourself for a holy life*" (NRSV says "*train yourself in godliness...*") -- so, there it is in black and white: Training/Discipline = Holiness/Godliness.

C--Now I know the word "discipline" isn't "cool" among teenagers today -- the whole idea seems like a straight jacket that cramps our style.

1--But all we really mean is *an ability to consciously, intentionally choose to follow the ways of God*.

2--And obviously, if we're going to FOLLOW the ways of God, then we have to KNOW the ways of God.

D--So, that's where things like Bible Study, Sunday School, and Youth Group fit in -- they're places and opportunities for "Discipline" = for us to *learn* the ways of God so that we CAN apply & follow them (& that's good advice for all of us, not just teens!)

6. But a final thing I think we need is something I think is implied through all the answers: **SUPPORT** -- support from home, from a church family, & from other Christian friends.

A--Throughout today's scripture, we find Paul using words and phrases which imply that Timothy had some sort of spiritual support for his Godliness

1--I.E., Verses 6 and 10b talk about him having "*brothers and sisters*" and "*those who believe*" who taught him "*good teaching*" that he later "*followed*."

2--I believe this is Paul's way of saying that Timothy couldn't have developed into the Godly man that he was if it hadn't been for the guidance, nurture, & loving challenge of others of faith who helped him grow into Christian maturity.

3--It's the same in OUR lives, as well -- we *need* the guidance, support, nurture, and challenge of other people like our Christian family, friends, and church to be able to weather the temptations of our world today. <sup>4</sup>

B--That's one reason I think it's so vitally important for us to be active and involved in a church family (including a youth group, if we're a teenager) -- because we NEED that kind of spiritual support (along with others) if we're to follow Christ in today's world.

--III--

7. In his comments, our Youth Minister CJ talked about the importance of “*being Jesus for others... to think about how we can enrich and make the lives of other people better*” by being the “*salt*” and “*flavor*” of their lives.
8. And today’s scripture I believe shares with us at least three things that we (as teenagers AND as adults) need in order to do those things and to live a Godly life in today’s ungodly world: *Courage; Discipline; and Support.*
9. So, my prayer for not only those of us who are adults here today, but especially for our teenage youth, is that through our practice of these three things, we would learn to trust God to help us follow Paul’s advice in Verse 12: “*Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young. Instead, set an example for the believers through your speech, behavior, love, faith, and by being sexually pure.*”
10. [CONFIRMATION RITUAL; at end, invite congregants to altar to PRAY FOR the teenagers of our church and community]

#### **ENDNOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> For example, 60 years ago, teens were commonly disciplined in school for things like chewing gum, running in the hallways, or talking out of turn. Today, it’s not uncommon to hear of school discipline being enforced for things like possession of alcohol or illegal drugs, physically threatening other students or teachers, possessing weapons, and making bomb threats (even if they’re just a prank).

Illegal drugs, alcohol, sex, cigarette, and violence are the constant companion and fear of many of today’s teens, so much so that in a recent poll 19% of teenagers admitted that they’ve sometimes felt “*it would be better to die than go on living,*” and 6% have actually attempted suicide itself (Psychology Today, October 1988; Gallup Poll, reported on “The Osgood File,” WBBM Radio, April 2, 1991, in “To Verify,” Leadership magazine).

<sup>2</sup> Here is a summary of the major points shared by each interviewee:

**Matt Rainey**: Teenagers face “tons of hardships” and temptations “not do the right thing” and going to “places that you shouldn’t go”, “Slacking off in school and not paying attention,” and so being a Godly teens means “Focusing and paying attention knowing that there’s something in the future that God wants us to do.”

**Georgia Paniconi**: Learning to “accept other people for their thoughts and opinions” instead of judging them because they’re not like us; Learning to “respect everybody, no matter what we believe”

**Ben Ivey**: “Being a good listener in church” (Prayer?); “Trying to help the community in different ways”; “Inviting people to church” and “spreading the word of God”; “Try to live through God in everything that you do”; “Being a kind person”; “Be consistent with your faith” — “pray more”.

**Sarah Sims**: “To be loving and caring”; “To spread the love of God... to people around you”; “Being there for people around you regardless of whether they’re Christian or not” = acceptance of others

**CJ Lord, Youth Minister**: “Be Jesus for other people” wherever you are; To “think about how you can make other people’s lives better” = how you can you “enrich their lives”; to be the “salt” and the “flavor” of the lives of others.

<sup>3</sup> I believe He's saying that when we know God is WITH us, then we can face *anything*, no matter *how* ungodly it might be! It's the same presence of God that gave Moses the courage to face Pharaoh, that gave Daniel the courage to face the lion's den, that gave Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego the courage to face the fiery furnace, that gave Jesus the courage to face the agony and suffering of the cross for you and me.

<sup>4</sup> We don't use our support persons as an *escape from* the world, but instead as a kind of fortress/ stronghold of Christian faith and strength right *in the middle of* a sea of peer pressure that could easily overwhelm us.