INSTRUCTIONS FOR A YOUNG MISSIONARY

I Timothy 4:13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

Young Missionary

I Thessalonians 3:2 We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God’s service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith,

I Timothy 4:12a Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young,

Devote Yourself To

The public reading of Scripture: Acts 13:15 After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak.”

Preaching is *“paraklesis”* translated exhortation in Acts 13:15 and encouragement in Acts 5:36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means “Son of encouragement”),

Another form of the same word is used to describe the Holy Spirit in John 14:7, where it is translated as Helper, Comforter, Advocate, Encourager and several other ways. The basic meanings of the word include admonish (about bad behavior), to exhort (to urge someone to change their conduct), to encourage someone to do better, to comfort someone who is suffering.

The word teaching can refer to the act of teaching or to the content of teaching, that is, doctrine. Here it seems to refer to the act of teaching. Timothy was to devote himself to the public reading of Scripture, to admonishing, exhorting, encouraging and comforting (preaching), and to teaching what the Scriptures teach.

Do Not Neglect Your Gift

I Timothy 4:14 Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

Neglects translates a word meaning essentially to be careless about. Use and develop the gift(s) you have, don’t focus on doing what you are not gifted for.

We all have gift(s):

I Peter 4:10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.

I Corinthians 12:7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

Romans 12:6a We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

Given through Prophecy and the Laying on of Hands

Although American Christians primarily think of prophecy as foretelling the future, which it sometimes is, its primary significance is speaking forth the mind and will of God, which cannot be known by human means. The Old Testament commanded that anyone who prophesied something in God’s name that was not from God was to be put to death.

Deuteronomy 18:20 But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death.

All believers can prophesy in the sense of sharing God’s already revealed truth.

I Corinthians 14:31 For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged.

Christians tend to go to extremes; either continuing to trust “prophets” who often get things wrong, or rejecting the concept of modern-day prophets altogether. In the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel in particular, there were far more false prophets than true prophets. In Matthew 7:15-23 Jesus tells us to beware of false prophets who would even do miracles in His name.

Although we all have gifts we should be using, we are encouraged to “eagerly desire the greater gifts” (I Corinthians 12:31).

Someone evidently prophesied that God was giving Timothy an additional gift at what was probably a commissioning service when the Elders and Paul laid their hands on him (2 Timothy 1:6). Although this could happen today, there doesn’t seem to be enough Scriptural evidence to conclude that this is the normal way additional gifts are received.

Be Diligent and Make Visible Progress

I Timothy 4:15 Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.

The primary meaning of the word translated “be diligent in” is to practice something as the result of planning. Have a plan and stick to it. Timothy is being told to be intentional about the public reading of Scripture, preaching and teaching and be disciplined in following the plan, so that everyone will see growth in his ability to preach and teach.

Pay Close Attention to Yourself and to Your Teaching

I Timothy 4:16a(NASB) Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching;

Notice Paul puts paying close attention to oneself before paying close attention to one’s teaching. This follows the theme elsewhere in the letters to Timothy that false teaching often follows rejecting your conscience. I Timothy 1:19&20; 2 Timothy 2:17&18

“Teaching” can mean other the act of teaching or the content of teaching, that is, doctrine. Either or both meanings are possible here: Pay close attention to what you teach and/or how you teach it.

Persevere and Save Both Yourself and Your Hearers

I Timothy 4:16b Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

“Persevere” translates a Greek word meaning essentially to continue for a long time.

The Greek word translated “save” means to rescue (Matthew 8:25); to heal (Matthew 9:22) and most commonly is used to mean being saved from the eternal and temporal consequences of sin. We have been saved from the eternal consequences of sin; we are being saved from the power of sin in our lives and some day we will be saved from even the presence of sin.

Here Timothy is being told that persevering in paying close attention to his life and doctrine will not only save him from the temporal consequences of sin, but it will also save those who listen to him from the temporal consequences of sin. Bad teaching has bad consequences.

Things to Remember

Those in ministry need to be diligent in preaching and teaching.

We all should use the gift(s) God has given us. We are encouraged to desire (and seek) the greater gifts.

Gifts can be given through prophecy and the laying on of hands, but that does not seem to be the norm.

Those in ministry, and all of us, need to pay close attention to our lives and those who teach need to pay close attention to their teaching.

Bad teaching has bad consequences; good teaching generally has good consequences.