

## How to be Respected

President John W. McGarvey  
*The College of the Bible*

Paul said to Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth". To despise the youth of a preacher means, I think, to disregard his preaching because he is a young man. And that is no uncommon thing in the experience of preachers at the present day. There is a great demand among the churches for young preachers; with many, because it requires less money to support them. But very often the young preacher finds that he is despised on account of his youth. It shows itself chiefly when the young man proposes some changes or improvements in the church which the older m[e]n and women have not been accustomed to, and they turn upon him and say, "Why, you are a young man just out of college, and do you presume to teach us?" Or the young preacher finds it necessary in discharging his duty toward God, to rebuke some of the abuses that ought to have been rebuked before; then they despise his youth. The young people, when he urges upon them the importance of propriety and sobriety, say, "Why you are no older than we are. If it were some older preacher we would listen to him." And thus, in various ways, the young preacher finds himself despised on account of his youth.

The question naturally arises, inasmuch as young men can not at once make yourselves older, what is a young preacher to do? If he is told to let no man despise his youth, his answer naturally is, How in the world can I avoid it? Well, Paul gives Timothy a recipe for that: "Be thou an example to them that believe." Well, in what way shall I be an example to the believers? In what particulars? Paul points out five of the particulars which he seems to think sufficient to accomplish the purpose. "Be an example in word, in manner of life, in faith, in love, in purity."

How to be an example in word. Does this refer merely to the preached word? Of course that must be included, because that is the most important word that the young preacher, or an old one either, ever speaks. Be an example in that respect, so that whatever you say in the pulpit, no man can despise. Be a good example for others to follow who stand to speak to the congregation. Of course it is to be free from thoughtlessness, frivolity and worldliness, and from everything that would detract from effectiveness in making men better and wiser.

"In manner of life". That refers to conduct. To conduct, not only in public and in the congregation, but in society. "Manner of life": that includes nearly everything that the young preacher does except

when he is asleep. If his manner of life is such as to be an example to the believers, one that they ought to imitate, they can not despise him in that particular.

The next item is faith. "Be an example in faith." Suppose the young preacher indicates by word or action that his faith is shaky – his faith in the Bible, his faith in Christ, his faith in the things that are revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Suppose it is discovered by the congregation, that his faith in anything of importance from Genesis to Revelation is very doubtful. Then, all thoughtful persons, old and young, will despise his youth. They will say, "This young fellow they have set up to lead us and be an example to us, and help us on in the way we should go, while he is wobbling like a lame man on that straight and narrow path himself."

Then, next to faith, the apostle says love. Be an example in love. Of course that refers primarily to the love of God, secondly to the love of the brethren, and the sisters—love of all good persons, and also to the love of sinners whom he is trying in love and earnestness to save from their sins.

There is another kind of love, however, that I think was scarcely included in Paul's intention in writing to Timothy. In those days you know that what we call "love affairs" among young people were scarcely known. The father and the mother of the two parties managed all those arrangements themselves, without trusting to the immature judgment of the young people. They could not trust a young man to pick out his wife, nor a girl to decide between her suitors. There was too much responsibility in the rearing of children and in the discharge of the duties of married life to be left to the judgment of the young people. But that is included in the word love, and we may safely conclude that the apostle would have a young preacher to be an example to the believers in his love affairs. He must not be a flirt. If he happens to be popular with the other sex, he must not allow his popularity to lead him into flirting. That is dishonest and mean. He cannot be an example before the younger people of the church if they find him to be a man of that kind. He must be an example in these things, in honesty and sincerity, as he loves God, that he may benefit and save the people.

Then he also says, "an example in purity." That word, unlimited, means purity in thought, words, conversation, action; so that the man throughout his whole being is a pure man.

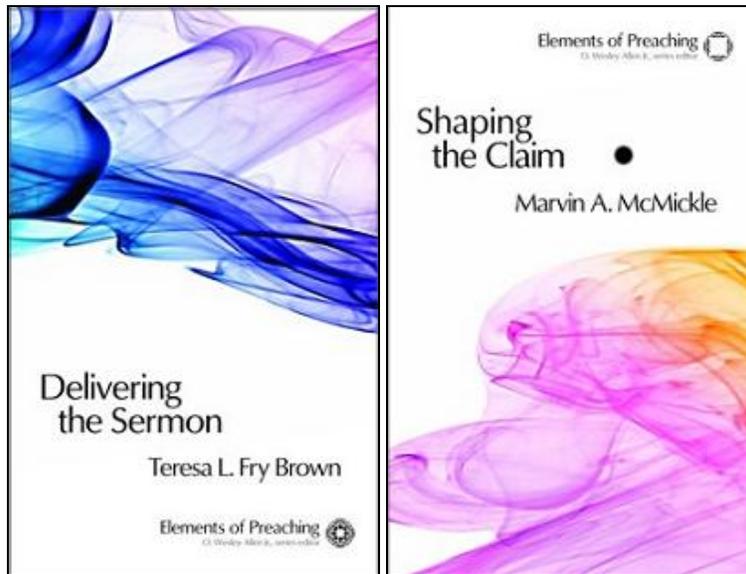
Now the young preacher who makes himself an example to the believers in these five particulars, is an admirable young man. No man is going to despise him on account of his youth. Every man and every woman who considers him sees in him an example for

themselves to follow, instead of an inexperienced young man for them to despise and look down upon. I can not think of any other way to keep people from despising your youth.

Now, brethren, every one of you will be exposed to the danger which Paul apprehended that Timothy might incur, and for which he gave this warning. How are you going to meet it? Will you bristle up when the old folks begin to criticize you, and say, These old people have never been to college and I have! I have been to the Bible College, and I know, and I know too that they don't know. What effect will that have? The very opposite. And when the young people begin to criticize him, what will he say? Will he say, I know I am not older than they are, but I know a good deal more than they do! I am here to "give it to them," and I am going to give it to them! If so, he may keep on giving it to them until at the end of his engagement with that church, [and] they let him go. They despised his youth. But if a man is an example to the believers in these five particulars, such a thing as that can never occur. Such a man is prized very highly by the believers, and they are thanking God for sending him to them. And they are constantly predicting what a great man he is going to be when he gets older. And that young man, instead of being discouraged because he is young, is conscious of the fact that he is getting older every day, and consequently all these troubles about being young pass away. I bespeak for that young man as he grows older an ever-increasing love and respect from his people.

Laying aside the matter of your success as a preacher, this is the way to get to heaven. This is the way to live a life that will be praised of men when it is ended, that will have the approval of good men while you are living it, that will have the final approval of God.

Now, brethren, let me impress upon you with all the emphasis I can command the words, "Let no man despise thy youth, but be an example to them that believe in manner of life, in faith, in love, in purity."



Elements of Preaching  
Professor O. Wesley Allen Jr. of Lexington Theological Seminary,  
series editor  
Each volume in the *Elements of Preaching* series offers brief, open-  
ended introductions to the basics of preaching from diverse  
perspectives. It is a solid homiletical tool that helps to develop the  
insights, framework, and skills necessary for powerful,  
transformative preaching.