**What Would Paul Tell Me?**

After 35 years of supporting my family through secular work, I have been blessed with the opportunity to preach the gospel of Christ on a full-time basis. I am thrilled and excited about the possibilities, but I also am humbled by the grave responsibility that accompanies this great work. What can I do to ensure that God will be pleased with my efforts? In the first century, an older gospel preacher wrote two letters, by inspiration, to a younger preacher with instructions that will forever be invaluable guidance for preachers of any age. Here are just a few of the principles Paul outlined for Timothy before he left this earth.

**Study**

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). Paul told Timothy not to neglect the spiritual gift that was in him through the laying on of hands (1 Tim 4:14-16). I do not have the gifts that were miraculously imparted to Timothy, but I do have access to the inspired scriptures and I can profit from Paul’s further admonition: “Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all.”

**Live a Godly Life** - In 1 Timothy 4:7-8, Paul told Timothy to discipline himself for the purpose of godliness, because godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. He emphasized in verse 12 that his speech, conduct, love, faith and purity would serve as an example to those who believe.

**Pray** – The Lord intends that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men (1 Tim 2:1-4). God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, and prayer is an important part of the conversion process.

**Do Not Be Ashamed of the Testimony** – God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline (2 Tim 1:7-8). When we fully realize that the gospel of Christ is God’s power to save (Rom 1:16), we will gladly defend it in the face of inevitable opposition.

**Preach the Word** – “…be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Tim 4:2-5). Sometimes preaching truth will be pleasantly “in season”, readily accepted by those who love truth. At other times (“out of season”), those teaching false doctrine will need to be opposed and corrected (2 Tim 3:13-17). Paul often refers to “fighting the good fight” (1 Tim 1:18; 6:12) but he also emphasizes the importance of being kind and not quarrelsome (2 Tim 2:24).

**Equip Others to Teach** – “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2), These two letters from Paul were written to an evangelist, however most of the principles he taught apply to all of us as Christians. We all should help one another in our quest to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

 **John McKee**