

# Today Counts Show Episode 76

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## Spirit of Leadership

Hey, everyone, and welcome back to the Today Count show. This is Jim Piper. We are in part four of a six-part series entitled "Timeless Wisdom for Diligent Leaders." I use the word diligent because if there is a bullseye for leadership, I do believe it belongs to the word diligence. I also believe that the Bible points to that as well. The spirit of leadership is that it follows in the alignment, in the design of the Creator. The spirit of leadership is about solving problems, creating new things, advancing. The spirit of leadership is about servanthood. It is not for the faint of heart. It is not for the thin-skinned, and it's also not for those whose skin is too thick because it also involves community.

## Leadership Principles in 1 Timothy

Today, we're looking at the letter again from Apostle Paul to Pastor Timothy. It's a source document dating back almost 2,000 years, and there are three strong leadership lessons that come from this chapter. I want to share those with you.

### Principle 1: Train Yourself

The first one is this: Paul tells Timothy to train himself. So, the first principle is to train yourself. He's speaking specifically of training ourselves in character, in the character of God. So, we typically call that godliness. And it is so important that we do that, that *we train ourselves in character and in integrity and in learning and in growing. Training ourselves in godliness will also impact our thinking. We can never speak enough and think enough about the power of right thoughts and right thinking.* Getting our minds aligned to what is true, not false, to what is right, not wrong, to that which is productive, that which is energetic, that which is positive, that which is forward moving, that which is serving. So, godliness is a lot about thinking. It's a lot about that. It's, of course, about behaving. We'll talk about that in a minute.

It says, "Train yourself." Paul tells Timothy to train himself in godliness, in big-picture thinking. And he points this out because *I believe that when we focus on becoming better from the inside out, when we focus on connecting with our Creator, connecting with God, being aligned with God, it radiates into all other areas of our lives. Our physical self, our intellect, our relationships, our leadership. All of these kinds of things are examples of the benefactors of embracing the idea of training ourselves.*

So, that's the first principle: train yourself to be godly. Paul says it exactly like this. He says, "Train yourself to be godly. Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come." And that's what I mean about big-picture thinking, eternal thinking. Those that have no hope about eternity, although you can see how confusing life can be when we have struggles and pains and persecutions and difficulties, but what those who do not see eternity in their hearts, they do not see it in their minds, they have a problem creating an idea of a testimony because without a test, there is no testimony. And so that's why godliness is such an important part of training ourselves as leaders.

The funny thing is, it might be the one area that is most difficult to do because I don't know that someone can inject godliness into us, into you. We have to decide to do that and we have to lean forward to do that.

My grandson is in the swimming pool at five o'clock in the morning Monday through Saturday, and then back in the pool in the afternoons as I understand it Monday through Friday. And for a young teenager, a 14-year-old, that takes a commitment, that takes discipline. And much like that, I think it takes that kind of commitment to grow spiritually, to grow from the inside out. So that's the first thing that Paul shares with Timothy.

And remember what I shared in one of my previous podcasts. I think sometimes when we look at these exhortations that come through Scripture, we kind of get this idea of rules and regulations and religious ideas. But I don't think that's the right way to think about it. I think what we should be doing is realizing that in order to sustain health, in order to sustain effectiveness, these are the things that God is giving us to protect us, to strengthen us, to prepare us for the days ahead. That's why it's so important.

So anyway, the first principle that Paul shares with Timothy in this fourth chapter of First Timothy is: train yourself, train yourself, train yourself.

## Principle 2: Be an Example

The second one, I think, would be to be an example. *Leaders need to be an example. Now, this might sound obvious, but in my work with leaders around the country, it might be obvious in theory but certainly not manifesting itself because we see a lot of unbecoming behavior.* But what does Paul mean to be an example to others? By what we say, how quickly does our vocabulary start bleeding into the culture's vocabulary? How often are we influenced by our culture instead of being an influencer of the culture?

*Be an example by what we say.* You know, using our tongue, we know how powerful words are. We know how sloppy we can be in the use of our words. So be an example in what we say. *Be an example in our lifestyle.* In our lifestyle, that has to do with everything from what might be socially acceptable in some places and not socially acceptable in others. There is a becoming lifestyle and an unbecoming lifestyle. There's a selfless lifestyle and a selfish lifestyle. There is an over-the-top, loud, boisterous lifestyle, and there is a meek but strong lifestyle. There is moderation and then there is overdone. These are the things to think about as you step into and exercise leadership.

The other thing that Paul tells Timothy under this umbrella, this idea of being an example, is to *be an example in love.* You know, have compassion and care for those that you are serving and that you are leading. Demonstrate faith. How do you behave when things are difficult? What kind of words come out? Are they negative words or are they positive words? I work with a lot of leaders talking often about vision and how to communicate vision. I'll speak to that in just a little bit. But be an example in love. *Be an example in faith.* And then *be an example in purity, fidelity, faithfulness.* Those kinds of core muscles are powerful.

Going back to one of our other podcasts in regards to this series on diligent leadership, you might remember that we talked about being a person above reproach. It's a high bar, but we want to make sure that we don't leave any cracks for accusers, for those that would attack us. And remember, if you stand for something, you're going to attract enemies. You're just going to. One of the important things to get straight in your theology in this world is that this is a broken world. There is the presence of good and evil. And when you represent good, you're going to have an evil counter punch, and maybe even more aggressive than a counter punch. And so living beyond reproach is the way to protect yourself from those kinds of attacks.

All right, so the two things: train yourself and then be an example. And here's how he describes being an example. Paul says it in these words, and I love this because Timothy is a younger leader. So he starts off, he says, "Don't let anyone think less of you because you're young. Instead, be an example in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. Your purity." Powerful words, powerful words. Train yourself and be an example.

## Principle 3: Throw Yourself into Your Work and Vision

The third leadership principle that Paul shares is to throw yourself into your work, throw yourself into your vision. Throw yourself into it. *If you give 50% of yourself during your working times, your thinking times on your job, then you're not going to be successful. It's going to catch up to you sooner or later.* When you're on the clock, when you are focused, throw yourself at it like a championship game, a championship meet, a championship wrestling mat. You know, bottom of the ninth, three balls, two strikes, bases loaded, you're down by three, right? That kind of attitude.

And Paul is rallying Timothy because we know Timothy to be a little timid. History tells us that, the writings tell us that. And you know, what leader have I met that doesn't struggle at some level with timidity, especially when they're younger? And if they don't struggle with that, then

they can kind of struggle with things that I think are worse, which is unbecoming, you know, haughty, arrogant, those kinds of things. So I don't think it's that unusual for a leader to be dealing with their insecurities. So that's really kind of what I think this one is about.

*One of the ways that you can battle your insecurities is throw yourself into your work, give your best. Let people correct you by tackling you from behind, by pulling you aside, versus trying to get a whip, trying to throw dynamite in front of you to try to get you moving. Don't be that kind of a leader. Be an energetic leader, be proactive, have some energy, take some risks, move forward.*

Specifically, what Paul talks about is, you know, make sure you know what your strengths are and leverage those strengths wherever you can. You know, *recognize that not everybody has the gift mix that you do, the skill sets that you do, that strength bias that you have, the bias to action that you have. Take that toolbox and put it to work. You know, give it in service, let it all out.*

Also, *what it means to throw yourself at your vision or at your work is not just using your strengths, but realizing that you need to lead within community. You need to recognize that not knowing everything is not a bad thing. Telling people that you don't know or asking for advice or help demonstrates leadership humility, not weakness. And it also creates a sense of collaboration and community, and that will build respect for you.* If you're so insecure that you feel like you have to know the answers to everything, sooner or later, you're going to be labeled as the smartest guy in the room, which nobody likes and nobody believes really exists because *true leadership, strong leadership, best leadership is collaborative leadership, collaborative leadership.* So use your strengths, recognize the community in which you are working.

And then finally, I would say on this, what Paul is trying to say to Timothy, "Look, Timothy, as a leader, you got to do what needs to be done." So regardless of your strengths and regardless of maybe even the majority vote, you got to do what needs to be done. That's what it means to throw yourself at your work.

And what do we mean when we say, "do what needs to be done"? Well, *what we mean is that doing what needs to be done is not always what you're good at. Sometimes it's not in your wheelhouse, but it's still your calling. It's still what you need to do for the good of the organization, for the good of the situation. So, doing what needs to be done is not always what you're good at. It's also not always what you want to do or that you feel like doing, but it needs to be done, whatever it is.* So, you have to work through the fact from time to time that you're not great at this, whatever this is, whatever conflict this is, whatever decision this is, whatever work that needs to be done. You might have to put five hours in on it where it could take another person one hour, but that's what you need to do. If you can't give it to somebody who can do it in an hour and it comes down to you, it's got to get done. You got to find a solution. You got to get it done. *So doing what needs to be done is not always what you're good at. It's not always what you want to do or that you feel like doing at the moment. It's also not always what is easy or popular. Throwing yourself at your work is being a diligent leader, doing what needs to be done.*

Here's how Paul said it to Timothy: he says, "Do not neglect the spiritual gift you received through the prophecy spoken over you when the elders laid their hands on you." So there's the giftedness and there's the community, and this is: *give your complete attention to these matters, throw yourself into your task so that everyone will see your progress.*

All right, so just as a wrap. As you are running, as you are walking, as you're exercising, as you're driving down the road, maybe you're cleaning the house, just say, "Huh, this is really good advice. It's ancient but timeless wisdom for diligent leaders. How am I doing in training myself in godliness? How am I doing at being an example for others, regardless of my age and regardless of my experience? And then, how am I doing at throwing my best self into my work and into my vision?"

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