

## Weekly Devotional by Pastor Ken Nabi

February 1, 2010

### The Power of Youth

*“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.” 1 Timothy 4:12*

I love this little verse tucked away in the Apostle Paul’s letter to this young up and coming pastor—Timothy. When I was in college, I clung to this verse for hope and I was reminded of it’s relevance this last weekend.

Paul says to Timothy, don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young which is an interesting statement to make. Really, Timothy can’t stop someone from what they think, but Paul says regarding Timothy’s age, “don’t let anyone look down on you.” Is that really possible?

I have counseled people for years about letting the opinions of others no longer rule their thinking or behavior or emotions. In fact, we tell people all the time: “it doesn’t matter what anyone thinks of you.” And, I think this is essentially what Paul is saying. “Timothy, just because you are young, it doesn’t matter what people think about you. What someone else thinks should not determine your actions.

But this verse is not a blank check of permission to do whatever you want. Notice the second half which is an exhortation toward blameless living. “Set an example for the believers....” Paul tells Timothy, not only should you not let what other’s think determine your actions—but also you set the pace and the tone of what life should look like. Rather than age being some mark of determination, let your life style determine the conversation.

In short, Paul is saying to live such a righteous life that even old critical people don’t have anything negative to talk about. If you live an example in what you say, how you live, and you do so with love/faith/purity then your critics will be silenced and holy living will become the talk. Age does not matter. What matters is the quality of life and the potency of the love of God in that life.

I said initially, I was reminded of this verse this last weekend. I spent the 3 days away with 110 teens and 20 incredible adult volunteers up north on a winter retreat. I was encouraged and I was challenged. I was engaged by the lives of these students. Some are living for God with passion and clarity and focus that would silence the criticism of many adults I know. On occasion, I stood back and watched their energy and zest for life. I was envious for the way they so freely spent their energy in fun and camaraderie. I was amazed at their appetites—not just for food (which was like human locusts!!)—but for relationships.

While I came home tired and a bit achy, I was so glad to have been around such great students and to have been reminded that Jesus took a group of guys not much older than the ones I hung out with, and he changed the course of life by teaching them and releasing them with spiritual power from heaven. The power of a young heart sold out for God is like a armor piercing bullet: It’ll rip through most anything.

We adults need to be freshly reminded that God loves teens and will most likely change unfolded reality still ahead of us with some sold out students. Let us be slow to criticize and generous with grace and affirmation. Like Paul, let's instruct them toward a life focused on the goodness of God's truth and love.

To my cabin of 9<sup>th</sup> grade boys and all the students from Snow Blast I say "live a life of uncompromising purity. Live a life of radical faith. And, live a life of unending love in the power of Jesus Christ." I for one will applaud you and happily stand back and watch what you can teach this congregation, this city, and our world by your example.

*Prayer: Lord, help me to encourage students toward wholehearted devotion. Make my heart generous with praise and affection as they seek to understand how to live a life of serious faith in a world that is acidic to Christ. Teach me through their example.*

Your Partner in the Gospel – *Ken Nabi*