



*“THE IMPORTANCE OF HOMEWORK”

Biblical Text: 1 Timothy 4:12-16

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Wow! It is terrific to be here, surrounded by the *Old Mission community of all ages and backgrounds, young and old, boys and girls, women and men, guests, new people to our community and long-time members. I love *“Back to School” Sunday. And a bonus today is that we get a *sneak peek* at these new windows!

And I love the first verse of our Biblical text for today, particularly on a Sunday when we lift up children, students, and youth. So, open your Bibles to *I Timothy 4: 12-16, and let’s begin. If you didn’t bring your Bible, it’s ok, you can use one of ours! If you need to know how to find your way around the Bible, ask one of our *3rd graders who received their Bible at Old Mission last Sunday!

Look at verse 12, **“Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”*¹ Those are powerful words. And the first message I want all our children and youth to hear is this one:

Don’t let anyone look down on you! *Not because you are young - or tall, short, skinny or big - or because of the color of your skin, hair, backpack, or anything else about you. Because you are amazing – you are a child of God!

But that verse doesn’t only apply to the young. It works for all of us. Don’t let anyone put you down, or put yourself down, because you feel too *old or young, or too uneducated or inexperienced, or your *race or language, or background or neighborhood or lifestyle or *income level, or gender*, or the kind of music you like, or anything else! Remember who you are – *you are a child of God!

*In this series, “*Old School Values*,” I’ve been pointing us in the direction of some values that endure and some practical truth from the Bible that we can hold on to.

And we need those truths. Maybe we need them especially today, in this world of fake news, uncertainty and fear, where foundations we once trusted seem to be crumbling. * We once relied on the essential goodness of humanity and looked to government, schools, and the Church to stand up for justice and right and wrong.

And I have not given up on those institutions today. Of course, I have little influence on seats of power and other arenas of conversation. *But I do have about 15-20 minutes every Sunday, give or take a story or two. So there you go!

¹ 1 Timothy 4:12, New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

As I said, we've been looking at what it might mean to reclaim some "old school" values for our lives today. So far, we have looked at the *power of learning and the *influence of friends. Today I want to talk about my least favorite part of going to any school I ever attended. *Homework. **But Homework is God's plan.**

*And here's why. It's not just about what we learn or have learned at School or Church or from those who set an example for us to follow. It's about what you do in your life with what you have learned! **It's about how you do your homework!**

*If the horrendous events in Charlottesville have taught us anything, surely they've taught us that people can know things, including the difference between right and wrong – but unless we live as good as we know, the worst can happen.

That's why Paul put it this way to the Philippians 4: * *"What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, **do**; and the God of peace will be with you."*²

Let's break that down and bring it to *Back to School Sunday and the events of our time. The Bible has something to say about what we should do in the face of racism: **"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."*³

That was the full-page ad by the United Methodist Church in papers all across our nation. * Bravo! We must not be silent! Doing something to overcome evil is not optional for those who follow Jesus. We can't just to learn what is right – we have to do something! Listen to these children, who already know what we should do.

*(play video clip)

The words of our text could have been written about them **"Let no one despise your youth, but set an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity."*⁴

There are not two equal sides where good and evil, justice or hate are concerned. There is only one side - those who follow Jesus and those who stand against.

God's side has always been clear. Listen to the words from Isaiah 11 about the character of the Lord: **"...with righteousness he shall judge the downtrodden and poor, and judge with equity the oppressed of the earth."*⁵

It was not by accident that the first words of Jesus' ministry in Luke 4 were these: **"The Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, freedom for the oppressed, and to proclaim the justice of our God."*⁶

² Philippians 4:9, Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Copyright © 1946, 1952, and 1971.

³ Op Cit. Romans 12:21. New Revised Standard Version.

⁴ Ibid. I Timothy 4:12. New Revised Standard Version.

⁵ Isaiah 11:4, paraphrased by the author, based on the NRSV and RSV.

⁶ Ibid. Luke 4:18-19, paraphrased by the author.

If we follow Jesus, our “*side*” is clear. Look at the remaining verses from I Timothy 4:

**“Give attention to Scripture, and to sound teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you...”*⁷ We need to know the Scripture, but equally important is what he says next!

** “Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress ... for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.”*⁸

We all have work to **do**. So do something! *Share with the world that it isn’t all crazy. That there is a better way. That all the stuff we learned in School and Church about equality and treating all people with respect, and loving your neighbor is possible. **That it is possible for people to follow a way of life that matters.**

And surprise, surprise! I have some suggestions about where to start.

Confront racial bias – even in yourself.

Widen the circle of your friendships.

Refuse to avoid people who are unlike you!

Treat all people as people!

Most of all - do not be silent!

Will you do that? I pray you will join me, and that we all will.

*Today, you have a chance to eat pancakes, have fun, visit with others, sign up for adult classes, Sunday School for ministries for the Fall. It’s been a great morning so far! Don’t you agree? Join me in thanking all the staff and volunteers!

But the best is yet to come. We have homework to do! We have work to do.

**“ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*⁹

This is the Word of the Lord.

⁷ Op. Cit. I Timothy 4:13-14. New Revised Standard Version.

⁸ Op. Cit. I Timothy 4:15-16. New Revised Standard Version.

⁹ Op Cit. Romans 12:21. New Revised Standard Version.