

Sunday 12th January

Covenant Sunday: Step Up and Stand Out

1 Timothy 4:7-15

Welcome

- Can you think of one time when they *chose* to stand out and another time when they stood out *but hadn't chosen this*.
- What emotions relate to these two memories? Which experience was harder (and why).

Word

1 Timothy is a letter from the Apostle Paul to his co-worker, Timothy, who had been put in charge of the church in Ephesus. There were a number of issues in this church, especially false teaching. Paul is calling Timothy to step up to his leadership role and confront these problems head-on. Paul uses the image of physical training. We are all called to step up to our covenant relationship with God and this is both vertical (Love God) and horizontal (Love others). Paul is clear that this stepping up is a shared call for all Christians. But he also points out that it looks different for each person, because we are all created to reflect God in unique ways.

Read 1 Timothy 4:7-15

1. What kind of 'godless myths and old wives tales' (v7) are around today? How can we avoid them?
2. What do you think it means to be godly?
3. What things have you done to train to be godly? What have you found helpful? (be as specific as you can here).
4. What are the similarities and differences between physical and godly training?

5. What's the difference between 'trying' to be godly and 'training' to be godly?
6. How would you describe the relationship between our effort and God's grace when it comes to growing in godliness?
7. What does godliness have value for? When does godliness have value? (v8)
8. Is training to be godly something you find difficult? What can you do to change your perspective on the value of training? Why do we train? (v10)
9. What challenges do you have that affect your godly training? What can you do to help you persevere? How can you be consistent?
10. Why would someone disrespect someone for their youth? (v12)
11. What characteristics does Paul challenge Timothy to develop in order to give no-one the opportunity to disrespect him simply for being young?
12. What is gained with age, what can be learned with training?
13. What does Paul say we should devote ourselves to (4:13)? Why are these important and central?
14. What does the word 'devote' mean to you? Does it challenge you to think about your godly training?
15. Does the gift(s) God has given us affect our godly training?
16. In verse 15 it says: "give yourself wholly" to these matters. What do you give yourself wholly to? Do we sometimes focus on the wrong thing?
17. Does the challenge to let others "see your progress" encourage or challenge you? (4:15) Can you measure spiritual progress, how?
18. When is it easier for people to see your growth and what types of growth might be harder to see?
19. Henry Blackaby has said: "Our relationship with God is personal, but it is never private." What do you think he meant by that statement?

Optional Scenario to discuss:

Alex works for a company that has been facing challenges, leading to high turnover and low morale. The company has announced a new initiative to improve the work environment and is seeking volunteers for a task force to help shape the company's culture and values.

Alex has been reflecting on 1 Timothy 4:7-15 and feels a nudge to step up and join the task force. However, Alex doesn't fully agree with the current culture and values of the workplace and is struggling to know how to put faith into practice in this context.

20. How could Alex respond?

21. How can the principles in 1 Timothy 4:7-15 guide Alex in contributing to the task force, especially when there are disagreements with the company's culture and values?

22. In what ways can Alex be an example in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity in the workplace, particularly when these qualities seem to be in conflict with the prevailing culture?

23. How can Alex use spiritual gifts to serve colleagues and create a more positive work environment, while also staying true to personal beliefs and values?

Worship & Witness

- What do you need to do to improve your godly training in 2025? – Set some real goals.
- Is there anything that distracts you from your godly training – do you need to do anything to be more focussed?
- Is there something you need to be able to Step up and Stand out? (courage, patience, confidence, strength, energy etc.) Ask God for what you need.

- Continue to pray for those people on your frontline, by name. Pray that they will get a better picture of Jesus because of your words and actions.

In need of some inspiration? Take a look at the following, written by divisional leaders in the Salvation Army in Ukraine. They are bravely embracing their giftings and engaging in service throughout the horrors of war;

'From the first waves of the full-scale war, we, together with all the officers, opened corps buildings, our homes, and became centres for helping refugees. The Salvation Army provided shelter, fed, clothed, provided first aid, psychological and spiritual aid. Despite the terrible panic and danger, not a single officer of The Salvation Army of Ukraine gave up his service, but on the contrary, they began to carry out their service as Salvationists with even greater determination. During these terrible war days, Ukrainian people saw The Salvation Army boldly fulfilling its mission We realise that our officers need to have an example for imitation, inspiration. Therefore, we make every effort to demonstrate the good example of the Saviour. We call to be courageous soldiers of Christ.

Territorial Leaders' Message

The Territorial Leaders, Commissioners Jenine & Paul Maine have recorded a message for Covenant Sunday – take a look here:

<https://vimeo.com/1040793445/4706948365>