

Speaking to the soul



Overlooked

Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith and your purity. 1 Timothy 4:12

By the time Paul wrote these words to Timothy, they had been colleagues for about 15 years, so Timothy wasn't particularly young. The Greek word for youth used here can describe anyone of military age, which went up to 40. Timothy was probably in his 30s, but his older friend Paul

knew that there would be people looking critically at the relative inexperience of Timothy, and Paul wanted him to do everything to resist it.

Interestingly, Paul clearly wasn't intending for Timothy to rebuke those who looked down on him. Timothy needed to respond to his detractors by the sheer quality of his life. By setting a good example in his speech and conduct, his critics would be silenced. His love, faith and integrity would let them know what sort of a man he was.

I am sure that Paul would have thoroughly approved of our society's sensitivity to age discrimination, but even though there are legal sanctions against it, it is still very possible for people to look down on others because of their age. We need to ensure that our churches are communities where people are valued for being themselves, whatever their age. I love seeing churches go out of their way to include younger people in their activities – in leading worship, welcoming, reading the Bible, praying and IT.

If you consider that you fit into the younger category yourself, I urge you not to respond by rebuking your detractors but by modelling to them the sheer quality of your Christian life.

QUESTION

What is the most effective way of countering age discrimination within your church?

PRAYER

Lord God, help me to love and value people whatever their age, background or circumstances. Amen

Photo - Co Antrim lighthouse

