



1 TIMOTHY 4:9-16

Part 9 of 1 Timothy

Pastor Mark Driscoll | 1 Timothy 4:9-16 | February 29, 2004

If you're new as well, we're in 1 Timothy tonight. We go through books of the Bible. This crazy idea that we have of going through the Bible seems to be going pretty good, so we're gonna stick with it till we see Jesus and he tells us to stop. Tonight we're in chapter 4. Verse 9 is where we pick it up, and I will pray for our time together, and then we'll jump into it.

Father God, we thank you for this great building that you have afforded us to meet in. I thank you for the construction that's ramping up so that we can have more events and more kids. God, I thank you for the sound system that was given. I thank you for all the kindness that just surrounds us. We know that your grace saves us and sustains us. It also provides for our needs. We see that as we look around the room.

God, as we study tonight your Word, please give us a heart for your church, your heart for your church and your heart for this church in particular. God, we pray that out of your Word tonight would come more leaders for this church, more people who love you, who persevere, who are wholeheartedly devoted to you, who love what you love and hate what you hate and do what you do.

And Father, we thank you so much for this church. I thank you for the people that serve and who work and who lead and who care, who pour themselves out so that the rest of us can be blessed. And as we study, we thank you, Lord Jesus, that when fully trained, we become like our teacher, that you are our teacher, that you are our leader. And tonight as we open your Word, we ask for your grace to be more like you. We thank you for giving it. Amen.

We're getting into this issue of 1 Timothy, and we're dealing with leaders in the church, the structure of the church, what our church looks like, how it should be organized, good teachers, bad teachers, true teachers, false teachers, qualified leaders, unqualified leaders. How many of you right now are leading something in this church? You're in children's ministry? You're teaching a Bible study or a worship team? You're helping an outdoor ministry, film and theology? You're a leader. How many of you aspire to lead? You aspire to teach. You aspire to be used of God for the ministry.

This sermon tonight, in particular, is for you. Paul's writing to a young man named Timothy who's sorting out a rat's nest of problems in a church in Ephesus. One of the main problems that they have is that certain people have started acting like leaders, but they shouldn't because they're following demonically inspired doctrines. They're leading people from the simple truth that Jesus is God and we should love him and love of people. Things are getting off track, and so Paul is writing to Timothy about how to be a good leader who sets a good example so that there'll be additional good leaders in this particular church.

For those of you that are leaders, this is a great text for you. For those of you that are emerging leaders, young people that God is raising up to lead in this church, this is an extraordinary text, and you should come back to it often.

And I would say this as well. In one varying degree or another, every single one of you is a leader in this church. There are people – friends, family, coworkers – there are people that look up to you, that love you. Maybe they're friends that admire you or appreciate your perspective or opinion. Subsequently, every single one of us has people that are following us. That makes you a leader. Leaders are people that have other people that follow them. In varying degrees you're all leaders.

I always tell this to my four-year-old son Zack 'cause whatever he's doing, his two-year-old brother does, usually something evil. If Zack's doing that, if he's swimming in the toilet or, you know, doing what he shouldn't be doing, Calvin does it. And I always look at him. I say, "Zack, who's your disciple?" and he says, "Calvin," 'cause Calvin does whatever he does. I said, "That's right. You're a teacher, and there's your disciple. Your little kid brother's following you around."

So you can be a sibling with kid brother or sister. They're your disciple. You could be a parent with children. They're your disciples. You can be a husband with a family. They're your disciples. You could be an employer, an employee. You can be a servant in this church. You have disciples. And how we lead and how we live is extraordinarily important because people are following in our wake, and they're following in our example for good or for evil.

So Paul tells Timothy, this young man, just how to be a good leader. Here's how to serve God faithfully. There's four things he hits. The first is a trustworthy saying. Here's what he says. "This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance, and for this we labor and strive," okay? And when he's talking about ministry, first thing he's talking about is a good work ethic. We labor and strive.

The context in the Greek text is to the point of agony. One commentator I was reading had a good insight. He said a lot of young people go into

ministry because they don't have to work outside or lift anything heavy. Okay, that's how some people end up in ministry. "If I got another job, I'd have to lift stuff. And if I'm a pastor, I don't. I'll be a pastor. I know a bit – there are a lot of pastors that are extraordinarily lazy, extraordinarily lazy. If you are a good golfer, a good fisher, you're a bad pastor. You don't have time for much else.

We had a bunch of church planters in this week for assessment. I told them, I said, "You're a Christian first, husband second, father third, pastor fourth. If you do those things well, if you pour yourself out with labor and striving in those areas, you're not gonna have a lot of free time."

I always have – a lot of single guys recently have asked me, "So what do you do for free time?" I go to Heaven. That's when I get free time. Until then, I'm busy. I got stuff to do. I got God and wife and kids and ministry, and I'm laboring. I'm striving. I've got stuff to get done.

Some guys don't labor and strive. Their work ethic is terrible. They don't pour themselves out. If you see a well-rested pastor who's mastered three or four hobbies, kill him. He's wicked, right? He's wicked as can be. He should be doing his job. Labor and strive.

I can still remember when we started the church. There were a lot of weeks that were 100-, 110-hour weeks, just exhausting, intense. Occasionally, there are still weeks like that. When you're in ministry, you're always working. That doesn't mean you don't take a day off and you don't Sabbath, but it does mean that some people can get sick or they can die or they can have crisis or that the phone keeps ringing. The e-mail keeps coming. The Bible still needs to be opened, that things need to be done, and the work never goes away. And unless you're a person that has sort of a high energy level and a really solid work ethic, you're not gonna be a good minister.

Anybody who wants to be an elder or deacon in this church, you gotta learn to labor and strive, not nap and hobby. That's not good. That's not good. I think seriously some of the laziest people I know, quite frankly, are pastors. Not all of them. There's some good, hard-working pastors, but I know some guys that spend 30, 40 hours a week studying for one message that stinks. And you gotta think, you know, we could pay somebody to stink for five hours a week, and we could save a whole lot of money.

Labor and strive. Work, work, work. Trust what he's saying. Labor and strive. Work hard "that we have put our hope in the living God." This is where our God is different than other gods. Other gods are not real gods. They're either idols, false gods who can't bless, can't answer prayer, can't heal, can't do anything or they're demons. Ours is a living God. He's not dead.

Did you guys know Jesus is alive? Hugely important. Big E on our eye chart is that Jesus is alive. We build everything around that. Jesus is alive. He's the living God. He's not dead. He's not dead at all. He's alive. Because of that, he can answer prayer, and he can heal people, and he can save people, and he can be involved in our life. He can be involved in our family. He can be involved in our church 'cause he's the living God.

He says we work really hard because we have a living God. We have something to do. There's still possibility. There's still hope. There's still the future. Things aren't done. There's work to be done, and the living God is already at work, so we work with the living God as long as we have life.

Oh, boy. Here we go. This is the hard verse. This next one is the hardest verse in all of 1 Timothy. I was reading. I was like, "What am I gonna do with this?" And I was like, "You know, I'll read it quick and keep going. That's what most guys do." I take a deep breath, keep on trucking, you know? Just [shugga dugga dugga dug]. Some guys do that, man. They read all the hard verses quickly and then tell a story about a puppy to distract you so you don't think about it.

But I gotta deal with it. It's right there. It says that God is the savior of which men? All men. Now, some of you are really strong Calvinists. You say, "All doesn't mean all." Right? You're gonna get sort of Clinton-esque on me and start reinterpreting the meaning of small words, right? Don't do that.

"And especially of those who believe." So we gotta deal with that. What the – what does that mean? Okay, now some people are universalists. What that means is that they teach that everybody goes to Heaven. All roads lead to Heaven. Everybody goes to Heaven.

But who talks about Hell more than anybody else in the Bible? Jesus. Jesus says don't fear people who can just kill you. Fear people who can kill you and the one who can throw you into Hell. Ooh, ooh. Jesus talks about Hell a lot. In Daniel 12, verse 2, it says that in that day at the end of time "multitudes will arise, some to everlasting life, some to everlasting judgment."

We're all gonna live forever. It's just an issue of where. Not all of us are going to Heaven. Some of you are saying, "Well, I don't worship Jesus, but I have a religion that tells me I'm gonna go to Heaven." [Pffff] That religion is not the living God, all right? Jesus decides who's in, who's out, and there is a Hell, and it will be full. It'll be absolutely full.

You read this in Revelation 14 that you'll be tormented there in the presence of the Lamb and his angels. Jesus and the angels rule in Hell, and you'll be tormented in their presence. Hell's eternal. It's painful. It's arduous. It's awful. It's excruciating, and it's unending. There is a real Hell.

I know some of you are saying, "I don't like that." That's the point, right? It's incentive. It's incentive. The reason the Bible makes Hell look so bad is to discourage you from going there. It's motivation. You say, "Oh, my gosh. That looks terrible. What do I do?" Well, Jesus will get you out of Hell, so give your sin to Jesus. He'll forgive you. Now you don't need to go to Hell. It's motivation and incentive. That's why it looks so terrible in the Bible because God loves you, and he's trying to get your attention.

So we can't say that there's no Hell. It can't mean that everybody is saved, so what does it mean that God is the savior of all men? I'll tell you what it means. You're living your life, all you wicked, crooked sinners, myself included, right? We're all wicked and evil. We're all doing it, so we say, "I'm not." Pride's the worst sin. You're really bad.

You're living your life, and there should be a consequence, reaping and sowing, right? But oftentimes, there's not an instantaneous one. Here's why. You're living your life, and God has his hand over you. God has his hand over you. God made you, and he made your mouth, and he revealed his name to you. And every time you use his name in vain, he should punch you in the mouth and send your teeth down the back of your throat, but he doesn't. He protects you. He protects you. God has his hand over you.

Some of you right now are fornicators and perverts and adulterers and liars and thieves and drunkards and gluttons, right? Next time you pick up a cheeseburger, your heart should explode. When the next time you download porno from the Internet, you should just be struck dead. The wage for sin is death. Every time you sin, you should die. You should suffer. There should be consequence that comes instantaneously, but it doesn't.

Some of you have been wicked for a long time. You've been doing terrible things, and you haven't really paid the penalty or price for your sin. Because of that, you're wondering if there is a God, and if so, you wonder if he's tied up with someone else 'cause you keep getting away with things. It's because God has his hands over you. What he's doing, he's saving you from the implication, the complication, from the consequence of your sin. He's saved you from that. He's absolutely saved you.

Some of you have been preserved and protected by God because God is loving and gracious and merciful and compassionate and good. God's a good God. Occasionally, what he'll do is he'll spread his fingers, and he'll let a little bit come through, a little bit of pain, suffering, justice, evil, atrocity. He'll let sin work you over just a little bit. Say why would God do that? Because he loves you. He wants you to see that there is consequence for what you do, so occasionally, he'll let you get hit with that, so you realize, oh, sin has consequence. If I don't come to Jesus, if I don't get my sin forgiven, I'm gonna have eternal, unending consequence. I'd better repent right now.

God is, indeed, the savior of all men. Everybody who is alive right now that curses God does so with the breath he gave. Everyone that argues against God does so with the mind that he made. Everyone who lusts does so with the eyes that he made. Everyone who steals does so with the hands that he made. Everyone that is arrogant and proud and selfish and self-consumed and narcissistic and wicked, they've taken the life that God gave them and the creation that God gave them to enjoy, and they've manipulated it so that they would become their own god.

You say, "Well, how come nothing bad happens?" Because God is saving them. God is saving them. This doesn't mean they go to Heaven. There is a day when God takes his hand away. There is a day when you die and you come before the Lord, but until that time you're being saved in the same way that if a firefighter ran into a burning building and grabbed somebody and carried them out, when the camera crew put the microphone in front of their face, the person would say, "The firefighter saved my life. He saved me." Doesn't mean you get to go to Heaven, but he saved me from harm.

Right now, those of you that have joy, happiness, life, breath, friends, family, jobs, that's all from God. James says every good and perfect gift comes from God. God's a good God, and he's being really good to you. Occasionally, he lets a few things slip through his fingers. He has saved you, and none of us get in this life what we rightfully deserve.

Before I was saved, I had a wonderful family. I had a wonderful woman that ended up being my wife. I had a lot of wonderful things in my life. I didn't deserve any of them because I was sinning against God, but the consequences weren't instantaneous.

Three says that God is the savior of all men. God is a good God to everybody. Some of you in your theology are so narrow that you think God only loves you. It says that God loves the whole world. He does, and he's good to the whole world, but especially those who believe. Those are the Christians.

He just told us up in verse 8 that physical exercise is good for this life, that godliness is good for this life and the life to come. The context here is that God will be good to you in this life, and if you believe in him, he'll be good to you in the life to come. That's the point. That's the point.

Some of you think that if God is good to you right now, you could continue to resist him and rebel against him and disbelieve in Jesus and not come to him for salvation, thinking that God will be good to you forever. No, that's only for those who believe. Those who don't believe, their sin catches up with them. The consequence comes upon them and in a flood and in a rush and in an instant upon their death, there is judgment and there is circumstance that they will despise forever.

That's why today is such a great day for you. You're alive. You get to be saved. You get to come to Jesus. You got to have your sins forgiven. You get to believe that he's God, that his death was in your place, that he paid the penalty for your sin, that his resurrection is real, that eternal life is a fact and that God is inclined toward you with kindness and grace. And he will save all who believe.

My question to you is simply this: Do you believe? Do you believe? Do you believe that Jesus is God who lived without sin, died for your sin and conquered Satan sin and death through his resurrection? Do you believe his Word, that he is the way, the truth and the life and that no one gets to the Father apart from him?

God has been good to you throughout your life, and unless you believe, there is a day when that comes to an end. We invite you tonight to Jesus, to believe. What this church needs most is people who believe. Before you can lead anything, you gotta believe in Jesus, not Jesus plus anything or anyone else, Jesus.

He goes on, he tells them, "Command and teach these things." Lot of preaching is not very commanding. It's like God's up in the sky giving a bunch of suggestions, not a bunch of orders. The commanding is the proclamation, that's preaching, the authority, and then people have questions. That's where teaching comes in to clarify things.

It's very popular in our day to give suggestions, opinions, perspectives, conjectures but not to command. You need to know this about God. God gives

commands. He gives orders, and when you defy them, you're rebelling. You're giving the finger to God.

Now, when God gives commands, it's not that he's some mean-spirited boss in the sky wanting you to jump from right foot to left like some capricious Greek deity. He is a loving Father who adores his children and gives them orders to protect them and to cause their life to be good. It's the same reason why I give orders to my kids.

Sometimes my kids don't understand my orders. It's because they're kids. All they need to know is the love of their father and the command comes from a loving heart. When you open your Bible, you're hearing from God. And when God tells you to do something, don't argue with him like a spoiled child. Obey him, knowing that you have a good Dad, and you need to believe that he knows what he's talking about.

First thing first, you wanna be a good leader, particularly in this church, what Paul's telling Timothy is this: You need to know God. You need to know that God is good to everybody, especially to those who believe, and that because of that, you work for God. And when you deal with people, you have to tell them what to do. And if they agree, then you gotta teach them how to do it.

A lot of you don't like that. You don't like conflict. You don't like to be disliked. You will not be a good servant of Christ. Jesus says, "Woe to you, who have everyone speak well of you." Some of you say, "I don't like Mark." You shouldn't. You shouldn't. I'm telling you what to do. I get paid to tell you what to do. You think about that. But providing I command you from Scripture and point you to Christ, my whole point is to get you to believe so that you'll have the life that God intends for you.

For those of you that like to be liked more than you like to be right, for those of you that like to give suggestions rather than commands, you're not gonna be a faithful servant of God. You can't be. First thing, you gotta know who God is so that you can instruct and command other people to obey him.

Second thing to be a good leader goes on in the next series of verses. It's great. Here's our verse, Mars Hill. "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young." Okay? Everyone here is young. Even our old people are young, right?

When we first started the church, this was the big knock on Mars Hill. "Oh, you guys are so little. You're so young and so cute how you got skateboards. It's so cute." We were young. We were very young. We're not as young as we used to be, right? I'm not as young as I – I got gray hair. I have in tribute named them after certain members of my congregation. I'm getting older. It's happening quickly, all right.

And the hard thing is, too, young is so relative. Like when I go to other conferences and I deal with other pastors, they're like, "Ooh, you're so young." Here everyone thinks I'm old and sold out. I don't know. 'Cause I'm not 20 and I don't have a tattoo and I can't play guitar, they're like, "Old man."

But young is interesting. I remember reading in the paper a couple years ago, they have the youngest senior pastor in the state of Washington. He was like 42. At the time, I was like 29. I went 42? You should've called me. I mean, I could be that guy's son. You know, we're young. I'm young for this job. There's 847 churches in the United States of America that are 2,000 or more. We're there. I think I'm the youngest guy in the country, youngest. I'm the Doogie Howser of Christianity. That's what I am.

So everybody's like, "Oh, that Mark. He's a young guy. He doesn't know anything. Wait till he gets old. Then he'll calm down." I get worse. I'm getting worse as I get older, more ticked and more set in my ways.

Don't let anybody look down on you. Don't let – and I love this because older people have a propensity to look down on younger people. Now, some of you are older, whatever that means. Maybe you're 30 and got a job. We're not against you. I'm all for having people that have jobs. I'm all for people that have been married longer than it takes to grow a beard. I mean, I'm not against having some older people in this church. We love you. We welcome you. Praise God, you know?

But don't screw up what we got going. We're doing just fine. Get on the bus, but don't be a speed bump to slow it down because at your last church, you know, they did things a certain way. A lot of older people show up here, and the first thing we gotta do is deprogram them like they're coming out of a cult. "The music's very loud." Yeah. "Are you sure these young people should be drinking beer?" Positive, yeah. That's a really positive. Some of them smoke. Well, you know what? They just met Jesus. I mean, they were gonna smoke forever, so we got them turned around one thing at a time, you know?

When you're old, sometimes you have this propensity to look at young people and say, "Oh, I don't think I can trust," but at some point, we have to let Christianity go to the next generation. We have to let people that aren't gonna be dead in a few years give it a run. Seriously.

I dealt at a conference recently. You know, I look around, and it's all people with gray hair. It's like a Q-tip box. I'm like, you know, pretty soon you're gonna be mulch. I mean, that's what you're gonna be. You're gonna have to hand this off. You gotta have a plan.

And here's what happens too. Some of you, because you've been Christians for awhile, you think you know what to do. You don't. I mean, some of you say, "Well, I've known the Lord Jesus for 27 years. I haven't done a thing, but I been doing that for a long time." Well, ducky for you. You've stunk for 27 years. That doesn't exactly qualify you to be in charge of anything, right? That's like saying, "I been wrecking cars for 27 years. I'm driving the school bus." No, no. No, we're gonna give somebody else a shot to drive.

And this is the problem that I see continually in this church. Some older people come in with a heart of Paul. Paul's an older guy. You think Timothy feels this way about Paul? Not at all. Paul says, "You're my son. I love you. Go get 'em," right? Timothy shows up at this church. All the other old people are like, "Oh, that kid, he just, he keeps preaching, and nobody's listening. Who does he think he is? He's telling us what to do. We got kids

older than him. We got cavities older than him.”

And you think about it and you go, you know, there’s two kinds of people when you get old. You get to be like Paul and you love to encourage and release young and emerging leaders. You get to be like the people in this church who just are so staid and inflexible that whatever it is that they’re doing, they refuse it to change. What they care about is what they’re used to, not about the forward progress of the Gospel.

And I’ll tell you this, Mars Hill. We’re gonna get there, okay. You have two choices. We have two choices. We can embrace our children or our traditions. We’re gonna have one and lose the other. We can’t have them both. You can’t keep your traditions and your children. Me? I want our children. What that means is my son’s gonna be leading worship some day, and I’m gonna hate it.

He plays guitar right now. He’s four. He’s got a nice guitar. He walks around the house an hour a day working on his hand action. He’s got rock star moves. It’s unbelievable. He’s got the whole head flip. He’s got the thing. I mean, he even puts his foot up on a box like it’s a monitor, and he’s just doing the full-on rock star arena thing. And my two-year-old son Calvin gets out the djembe, and he’s doing hand drums, and I mean, it’s unbelievable. It sounds like someone’s landing a helicopter in my house.

I say, “What are you doing?” He said, “I think I’m gonna be a worship pastor.” I’m thinking, “You know what? Praise God. I’ll buy earplugs, and I’ll raise my hands ’cause my son loves the Lord, you know?” There’s gonna be a day where we have to choose between our children and our traditions, and God curse us if we choose our traditions over our children. God curse us all.

And what he says here is don’t let anybody look down on you. Timothy’s a young guy saying, “I love God. I serve God. I’m teaching the Bible. I’m doing what the Bible says.” And these older people are saying, “But you’re not old enough.” Age has nothing to do with anything. Maturity, wisdom, godliness, strength, courage, theological acumen has everything to do with it.

How old’s Timothy at this point? He’s in his 30s. He was between 18 and 20 when Paul picked him up. He’d been with Paul at this point upwards of 15 years. He’s somewhere between 30 and 35 years of age. In some churches though, that’s the nursery, right? That’s as young as it gets.

Now, here at Mars Hill, we’re just the flip, right? We are – we’re a very, very, very young congregation, one of the youngest median-age congregations in the United States of America, and you need to know this. God often works through young people.

Josiah, the great king of the Old Testament, he was installed at age 8. At age 26, he led one of the biggest revivals in the history of Israel, 26.

Jeremiah was a kid. He says in Jeremiah 1, “God, how can I preach? I’m just a punk kid?” He’s still got that teenage, crackling voice, can’t even shave, and he’s supposed to go call people to repentance with that teenage voice. “Repent!” It’s like who’s gonna listen to that?

Isaiah? Isaiah prophesied for some 40 years. He was a teenager when he started.

God came in human history. He needed a mother. He picked a junior high girl, a teenage girl. That’s really fact. Jesus was raised by a woman that today we wouldn’t even let her lead a prayer group in a high school study, but she can raise God.

Throughout the course of human history, it’s been that way as well. One of the greatest theologians in the history of the church, John Calvin, wrote “A Systematic Theology of the Institutes” in his 20s.

The knock on the Puritans was “they’re kids.” Love the Puritans. One of my favorite Bible teachers in the history of the world outside of the Scripture is a guy named Charles Haddon-Spurgeon. Started preaching when he was 17, no education. He was trained by a woman who was a cook. Apparently, she loved Jesus and didn’t jack him up like some seminaries do, just let him preach the Bible. He was the boy preacher.

And Jesus Christ finished all his work by what age? About 33, about my age. I feel convicted. Jesus was already done forgiving all the sins of the world by the time he was my age. I mean, I’ve got a lot to do before I turn 34 apparently. I mean, you know, you get the impression that God can use young people, that God uses young people, but old people, some have the heart of Paul and say, “Have at it. We love you. We’re behind you. We’re with you, for you.”

Other old people come along like these guys and just look down on you. How many of you have experienced this? You said, “I go to Mars Hill,” and at your school or with your friends or family, “Oh, that’s the young church with the young people, and that’s the young pastor.” I get that all the time. It just infuriates you. It’s like I’m getting old as fast as I can.

And when you’re young, they say, “Oh, you’re young,” and when you’re old, they say, “Oh, you’re sold out.” So you can’t really win in this deal. You’re jacked either way, you know?

Here’s what Paul tells Timothy. Don’t argue. Don’t fight. Don’t get all ticked off. Here’s what you need to do: Me and you. Me and you. Set an example. Let our life speak for itself. Let our church speak for itself. Set an example for the believers in a couple things. Watch your mouth. Watch your tongue. And your life, how you live your life in love, are you loving to God, loving to people? “In faith,” do you trust God? See, immature people, they’re unfaithful. They have ups and downs. They’re excited. They’re not excited. They’re consistent. They’re not consistent. They’re motivated. They’re unmotivated. They commit, and then they back out. There’s no faithfulness. You need to be faithful.

“And in purity,” that’s sexual. I tell you what. I commend you. At this church, how are we doing in purity? Honestly? Honestly. Fornication is not a big issue in this church. Now, you would think with as many young people that we have and as many people that desire to be married, that the church elders would be dealing with sexual immorality all the time, people sleeping together. We don’t. Not saying that everyone here is holy and perfect. What I am

saying is the majority of people who come here are working hard to set an example.

Even in the premarital class, when couples come in, they're not sleeping together. They're not living together. They're loving Jesus and maintaining purity. And I'll tell you what, that's the best thing we can do. There's more virgins right here. We would have to go so many miles from here to find this many virgins. I mean, it's true.

You know, our cohabitation rate as a city is 257 percent higher than the national average. We need to just set an example, okay? We need to say, "You know what? You may look down on us. You may not respect us, but just look at the fruit. We love Jesus. We love you. We're faithful. We tithe. We pay our bills. We study the Bible. We have sound doctrine. People are coming to Christ. We're planting churches. What do you want?"

I'll tell you what they want. They want somebody that's old like them who doesn't bear fruit like them because they find this convicting. If you want the God's honest truth, most critics are jealous people, who rather than performing, criticize those who are. That's the truth. That's the truth.

I talked with a guy recently who's a professor. He was arguing with me on a theological issue at a Starbucks. I was trying to read my Bible, and he interrupted me to argue. He said, "Oh, you're Pastor So-and-So from this church." I said, "Yeah." He says, "Well, I wanna talk to you about this." I'm like, "I don't remember asking, but okay, fine. I got this verse on love, so I gotta do this now. I gotta listen."

And he says, "Well, you know, I know you're young, and you're just getting started, but you know, you really need to [da, da, da, da, da]." He's arguing with me about the authority of Scripture trying to get me to have a lower view of my Bible. He said, "When you been in it a long time like me, you know, things change, and you come to different convictions."

I said, "So what you're telling me is you started off strong, and then now you're sort of a tired old man?" I said, "You're a tired old man." I said, "You know what? Shame on you. You know, you used to be a guy that preached the Bible, and now you're not sure if you should give commands like it says because you're not sure that that's God's Word, and you're all confused, and you have more degrees than Fahrenheit, and you're educated beyond your intelligence. You know, shame on you."

I said, "Honestly, when's the last time you saw somebody come to Christ?" I got a blank stare in return. He says, "I don't know what that has to do with anything." I said, "It has everything to do with everything. If you don't love Jesus, if you don't teach the Bible, and if people aren't getting their lives changed, don't lecture me because you've been stinking for 30 years more than me. Don't lecture me."

Now, if you love Jesus, and you're 30 years older than me, and you're bearing fruit, have at it. Be just like Paul. Tell us all what to do. But don't think just because you're old you get to boss people around that are young 'cause if those people love Jesus, and they're serving Jesus, and they're bearing fruit for Jesus, you should be quiet and learn from them. You should."

You know, that the little kids over in the nursery have lessons for us all. God help us all when we look at a six-year-old or a seven-year-old or an eight-year-old and say, "Yeah, those little kids, nothing to teach me." I'll tell you what. A seven-year-old can be filled with the spirit of God. A seven-year-old can be filled with the spirit of God, and providing they're filled with the spirit of God, they have things to teach us all.

But it just infuriates me when people think that because they have more years that they have more wisdom. People do that. I meet these people when they come to the church, and they say, "Well, when you get older and wiser..." [Whistle] Don't put those two together. Don't put those two together. They don't always go together. They don't always go together. Wisdom is oftentimes a gift that God gives. There are 20-year-olds that are wise. There are 80-year-olds that are fools. Don't always put age and wisdom together. "Don't let anyone," he says, "look down on you. Do not put up with that." Do not tolerate it.

Some of you already have. You say, "I'd love to lead. I'd love to serve. I'd love to teach. I'd love to do ministry. I'd love to serve the Lord, but I'm young." You're not young. You're Christian. Serve God. Do what he's enabled you to do. Follow the passions that he's put in your heart, and live an exemplary life. Live a life that people can't criticize you. That has been my whole thing in the history of this church. I remember we started, and it was just criticism after criticism after criticism. And at this point, it's like this is my resume, okay? This is my resume. Mars Hill is my resume. If you wanna think that God's a good God, look around. Look what he's done. It's unbelievable really. I still wake up and go, "I can't believe this." I can't believe that I get to do this for a living.

But even at this phase – and I know that some of you are young and you're insecure and you're just starting. Even at this phase, where I've been in ministry full time here for over seven years, even at this phase there are still certain people that try to manipulate you through their age.

And for some reason, too, I'll say this to the older women in the church. Please don't do that. There is a history of older women who have a propensity to come into this church and start acting like mothers, telling everyone what to do. I've had some women in this church that are older say the most ridiculous, insulting things to me. "Now, make sure you read your Bible." I know, I know. "Don't have sex with anybody you're not married to." Duh! Praise God, I didn't know that, you know, like I had no idea. Like, it's like your mom, you know? "Do you have your underwear on?" Yes. And don't check, okay. You know, it's just sometimes older women in particular can mean well, but they can end up meddling when they shouldn't.

Right now, in this church there are some exemplary young leaders. Our fastest-growing community group is over in the University District with our youngest teachers. You know what I'm looking for? Godliness in leaders. If you're 70, great. You're 17, great. If you're 12 and you can preach, great. Great. Jeremiah was 12. They let him through.

This is why most churches die. The older you get, the older other people have to be for you to think that they're an adult. If you're 70, they gotta be 40.

That's what Paul is telling Timothy. Don't put up with that. Set an example, and here's what he needs to do. Set an example. In 13, he needs to be biblical. "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching." What he says is this: Don't let anybody look down on you. Do two things. Live a godly life and be a Bible guy.

That's it. Your authority comes from Scripture. People may come in, and they may have all kinds of questions, but if you know your Bible, you're gonna have credibility. That's why you need to be a Bible people. We need to be a Bible people. It's not just so that you can have a devotional life and a holiness with God. It's so that you can be a leader in the church. In that culture, there weren't a lot of copies of the Bible readily available because the printing press hadn't been invented. A lot of people were not literate, so they had to read the Scripture publically. You and I have a privilege. We can read the Scriptures, okay?

We built our whole church on these three things. Read the Scripture, through the preaching of the Scripture, get together with people and study and teach the Scripture. That's what we do. Preaching is on Sunday. Reading you do all week. We also read together as a church. Teaching is what happens in classes and community groups. That's why we even center a lot of the community groups around the sermon so that we're all going through the same book of the Bible together, and then we tell you to teach that to your own kids. We take this incredibly seriously.

We are not a church that is driven by style, by hipness, by youthfulness. We are driven by theological conviction. We are an extreme Bible people. We, Genesis to Revelation, take it all as fact from God. We are absolutely committed to doctrine and to theology and to Scripture, and that's what Paul tells Timothy. "If you're young, stick to your Bible. Know your Bible. Preach it. Teach it. Read it. Live it. Love it. Obey its commands."

If I could implore you, Mars Hill, to be anything, work on all these three areas. Some of you are good readers, but you're not yet teaching. You need to be teaching. Some of you are good at learning, but you're irregular in church. And some of you are just good at coming to church, but you're not getting taught or you're not reading. God's put together these three avenues by which the Scriptures come to us. The Scriptures come to us through preaching, through teaching and through reading, and we need each of those opportunities for the Scriptures to dwell in us.

"Live an exemplary life. Be biblical, and do not neglect your gift, which was given to you, through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid hands on you." Here's the deal. For those of you that wanna become elders and deacons, God is gonna call you to that, okay. This is the closest thing we get to ordination in the New Testament.

I hear this question a lot. People come in and they say, "Are you ordained?" I tell you what ordination is. Ordination means jack squat. That's what ordination means. Eighty percent of pastors who graduate from seminary and get ordained within five years are out of ministry. A lot of good the ordination did.

Ordination in the human sense is where you gotta go through seminary. You gotta be tested. You gotta go before a review. You gotta pass a test. Then you get ordained. Am I ordained? Yes. Do I care? No. Why did I get ordained? 'Cause you care. That's why I got ordained. I don't care. What I care about is God's calling.

Before, you know, 'cause you know what? An organization, institution, a denomination, a school can put their hands on you and say, "Pastor," but if God doesn't, it doesn't mean jack squat. God's the one who makes ministers. God's the one who calls people. That's what he says here. God gave Timothy this gift. "You're gonna be a preacher. You're gonna be a Bible teacher. You're gonna be a leader." God gave him that gift, and it was confirmed through the elders in the church. That's what elders do.

Some of you say, you know, "I wanna be a minister." God makes you a minister, and then it is the elders of the church that confirm your calling. I dealt with that this week with these pastors who are coming in. Your calling, has God given you that gift? Has he enabled you to do that? We can't train people to preach or teach or lead. God gives them that ability. Those are spiritual gifts. We can help cultivate, nourish and encourage that, but we can't make something that God hasn't intended. A lot of schools try. A lot of churches try, and they fail.

What happened to Timothy, his situation was the elders brought him up, laid hands and prayed over him. We're gonna do that in a few weeks with a new elder, and that's what we do here, commission him. And at that moment, a prophetic message was given.

Now, some of you guys go, "Woo, prophecy. I don't like that." See, 'cause you come from charis-maniac weird nut job church that looked like an aerobics session, and everybody had a prophecy about everything. Okay, prophecy in the New Testament is beautiful, glorious and good. We believe in the perpetuity of all the gifts. We just believe that some people abuse them, but because they're abused, we don't throw them out. We use them biblically. We go back to the Scripture.

I was called into ministry through a prophetic word. I was praying when God spoke to me. He said, "Plant churches. Study the Bible. Marry Grace. Train young men." I had a guy recently say, "How do you know that was the Lord?" What the - ? Study your Bible? Like, marry the pastor's daughter? Train young men and start churches? Like, well, where do you think that came from? Like if it was, you know, sleep with another pastor's wife and preach the Bhagavad Gita and start mosques and train, you know, rottweilers, well, maybe that would be Satan, you know? But it wasn't that. You know, it was like, well, I don't think Satan wants people doing like intense Bible teaching. I just don't see that.

That's what he gets here. Timothy gets that kind of thing, and most of the time prophecy is not something new. It's the Scriptures being applied. Timothy, you're a preacher. You're a teacher. God has his hand on you. He wants to use you. That's what it is. And prophetic utterances commonly show up in an amazing way. It just comes at this moment of Timothy's installation as an elder.

What I'm saying is this? Who gives your gift? God. Who determines when and where you live? God. Who enables you to serve? God. Who determines

how old you are when you start serving God? God. So who are other people to look down on you? Sinners, jealous, immature.

That's why Paul tells Timothy in chapter 5, he says, "Do not rebuke an older man harshly." He doesn't say don't rebuke an older man. Let him have it and smile. "You stink and you work for Satan, and I love you." You know, it's an issue where you're gonna have to learn to listen to your elders. Listen to godly people. Listen to older people who love the Lord, but don't listen to everybody. Gotta be very selective in your hearing.

Timothy's learning to be selective. He says, "Be diligent in these matters and give yourself holy to them." First thing, you gotta know who your God is. Second thing, you gotta live your life. Third thing, you gotta be biblical. Fourth thing, you gotta finish well. Be diligent in these matters. What he's saying is, "Keep going. Life gets hard. You gotta maintain momentum. You gotta maintain energy." Some of you are stop and start, stop and start, stop and start. You're inconsistent. You're like driving a clutch with a 14-year-old kid. Rest of us are just getting whiplash. You gotta get a little rhythm in your spiritual life.

Some of you are not diligent. You get all motivated. "I'm gonna tithe. I'm gonna tithe every week for a whole week. [Sigh] Did it." Great, wow, wonderful. You know, "I'm gonna read the Bible every day, every day for four days no matter what." And then you get done. You're like, "Woo, woo. Billy Graham could call with questions now. I'll help him out, you know. I got it all."

Young people sometimes lack diligence. They lack consistency. They, they – "I'm gonna serve. I'm gonna serve." Okay, how come you didn't show up? "I was hung over. I couldn't make it. I prayed about. I..." Diligence, right? Diligence.

My first ministry, my very first ministry was not this. It was a nursery, okay? There was a Women's Bible Study in college. Some of the women would get together in the afternoon, the moms, and they'd have a Bible study, and they got up in the church and said, "We need somebody to watch our kids." And I thought, "Oh, isn't that cute. I'll watch the wee little ones." So I thought that'll be great. I'll go watch some little kids. This'll be great. I love kids. I'm a great guy. Kids'll love me.

I show up – 12, 13, 14 kids between the ages of 2 and 4. They're like sprinklers. There's fluids coming out everywhere. Literally, I'd never seen so many fluids, like they're all springing leaks, you know? Runny noses and throwing up – throwing up – not to mention what comes out of the front and the back and the nether regions, unbelievable things. Kids go to the bathroom, get it all over their neck – their neck. It's like a jumpshot. Like what in the world? How'd you do that?

And they're all going, so they're springing a leak, springing a leak. "I need crackers. I need juice." And they can't talk. They don't know English, so I'm fishing around. I'm looking for Pentecostal friends to help to tell me what that language is. And I'm just thinking, "This is un – first week I walk out. I just, I feel like I'd just given like 75 pints of blood and I was all light-headed. I felt like quitting. I was like, "Well, that was it. That was a great week. I served the Lord. Praise the Lord."

And I thought, "You know what? No." I remember I was reading Timothy at the time as a new Christian thinking, "You know what? I gotta hang in there. I gotta do this. I gotta do this because I gotta be diligent in these matters. I gotta give myself wholly to them." So I'm changing diapers, crackers, juice. I mean, I'm in there for a year, school year. You know, 19-year-old guy, new Christian. God spoke to me and said, "Be a pastor. Preach the Gospel. Change the world." I'm thinking, "Woo hoo. I'm sitting there changing diapers, not changing the world." Was thinking, "Lord God, what is this, you know?"

Jesus says, "If you're faithful with the little, you can be trusted with much." God doesn't just say, you know, "Here you go. Here you go. There it is. The whole world's yours." No, it's little by little, one foot in front of the other. It's like, "Okay, I gotta be diligent in these matters. I need to give myself wholly to them so that other people will see your progress." That's the key.

Some of you don't do ministry. You don't serve. You don't give. You don't participate because you're extreme perfectionists. You wanna do everything right. You will never do anything if your goal is to do it perfectly. There isn't such thing as perfection, but there is the aspiration of progress.

You see, we're sinners. It's a crooked world. Since Genesis 3, everything's a mess. But can there be progress? There can be progress. My goal for you guys is simply this: I want each of you to make spiritual progress. That's all. Be diligent. Give yourself wholeheartedly. Build momentum. Build obedience.

Some of you say, "The Bible says love my wife. I loved her. Didn't work." Love her again. Love her again. Love her until it works. That's faith. I take God's commands, and I obey them. He's a good God. This will work. Diligence, wholeheartedness, progress.

How many of you since you've been at this church, you have seen other people come to Christ or new in Christ make progress? Some of you are sort of not diligent, and you're a little apathetic, and you've seen new Christians just slingshot right on by you. I've even had some people complain in this church. "I don't even know the leaders anymore." Well, that's because they passed you, and that's not their fault.

Church is not a union. Seniority doesn't mean a thing. It doesn't. It doesn't. I've seen a few people in this church get saved and within a year just slingshot by people that have been to Bible college and have known the Lord for 20 years. And they do it through diligence, not legalism, diligence. They read. They study. They pray. They serve. They're consistent. They're disciplined. They're motivated. They love God, and they keep going.

Other people are apathetic, indifferent, stop and start or some of you were diligent until you reached a place where you felt like you're doing pretty good, and then you just sort of got lazy. That's why some of you love to be around new Christians. There's that diligence that comes that sometimes carries for the first year or two. It needs to continue forever.

I remember as a brand new Christian thinking, "Man, I'm behind." Some of you started behind. I was saved at 19. I remember hanging out with my buddies. They all knew the Bible. I remember going to my first Bible study. They said, "Turn to the book of Blah," and I'm like, "We have books? Oh, my gosh." And it was, "Go to 5:3." "5'3"? I'm 5'9". Where's – who's the guy who's 5'3"? I don't know what he's talking about? 5'3". Okay, I'm 5'3". There you go." You know, I don't know what he's talking about.

The guy leans over next to me. He says, "You know, there's 5 – that's chapter 5, verse 3." I'm like that's brilliant, man. That's brilliant. I put sheet tabs in my Bible because I go to the Bible studies, and by the time I found the book, the Bible study was over, seriously. So, you know, I felt like I'm 19. I'm so far behind, and then I realize. You know what? I just need to be diligent. That's what I need to do. Just put my head down, read, study, pray, serve so that I can make some progress.

My first sermons at this church were really bad. They were terrible. Some of you are saying, "They're not anymore?" They're not as bad as they were. They were not good. I mean, I – my wife asked me last night, she said, "Have you listened to any of your old sermons?" I said no. She says why? I said, "I can't afford the medication. I can't." It's so depressing. It's awful. It's just like what was he? And it wasn't like I didn't make any sense, but it was like I just didn't deliver well. It was not good.

Some of you are frustrated right now 'cause you're trying to serve God. You're trying to teach. You're trying to encourage. You're trying to counsel. You're trying to mentor. You're trying to serve, and you're saying, "Man, it's just not that good." Diligence and progress.

What that means as well as a church, we need to be in the habit of encouraging one another. I see progress. You do? Yes, I see progress. Your friends and those Christian brothers and sisters that are here in the church, you need to encourage them. Tell them that you see progress because sometimes people don't see their own progress. They start wondering, "Man, am I making any headway here?" Yeah, you are.

Somebody's marriage is a wreck, and they come to Christ, and they're making progress. Tell them they're making progress. Somebody in your Bible study that you're in, all of the sudden they're praying and they're reading and they're caring. Tell them you see progress. Even as you leave here tonight, the people you came with, those areas that you're seeing progress, make note of them. Love them. Encourage them. Tell them you're seeing progress.

And for us as a church, this needs to be a goal. My fear is this. My fear is that we get to the point where we feel like we've done something. That's my big fear. We need to keep making progress. We need to keep being diligent. I mean, right now, this is the best season ever in this church. Construction's getting done. Building's full, going to three services. Churches getting planted, bills paid, people getting saved, people getting married, kids being born. It's great. I'm having the time of my life, best time in my whole life.

My fear is that at some point, though, even as a church lethargy sets in, and it's like we don't need to be as diligent. We don't need to show as much progress. I had a guy recently, a pastor I was arguing with, he says how's it – this was last year. He said, "How's it going?" I said, "Man, we're seeing people come to Christ. We've grown 60 percent every single year." He says, "Well, that'll change." Well, thank you, buddy. That's great.

I said, "Well, what do you mean?" He said, "Well, when you been in it awhile, after awhile you just realize that things slow down." I said, "Well, I hope not. I have this book. It tells me that the tomb's empty, and we have a living God. So I'm hoping that there's still action. That's what I'm hoping for." And he said, "Well, call me next year and tell me if you're still doing 60 'cause I know you can't do this forever." I called him up. I said, "Well, we're doing about 90, doing about 90. Thank you very much."

It was we're gonna keep serving God. We're gonna keep being diligent. We're gonna keep making progress, which means we're not competing against every other church in town? Christians in the church aren't competing against other Christians in the church, but we are comparing ourselves to where we were in a week or a month or a year ago, and our goal is progress. Man, I'm not at the same place that I was. I'm making progress here. I'm moving forward, and I see that.

How many of you right now you see progress in your life, and you thank God for it. You're encouraged. You should be. How many of you see progress in this church? I mean, it's everywhere. Praise God. There's so much of life that's just stuck in a rut and going nowhere and getting nothing done. And here's the deal: We can make progress. I hope you walk out of here with a little bit of hope. I hope you walk out of here with faith. There can be progress. The marriage can be bad. The life can be brutal. Stuff can be confusing, but there is progress for those who believe.

It closes with this. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Two things. These are the two pedals on your Christian bike: life, doctrine, life, doctrine, life, doctrine, life, doctrine. Some of you young White guys? Doctrine, doctrine, doctrine, doctrine. What about life? Pfft. Doctrine, doctrine, doctrine, doctrine. Life and doctrine, right?

Some of you guys, you read too much, right? You don't get any sunlight. You're all pale. You're like Ted Kaczynski holed up in a shack somewhere typing out your manifesto for the world. C'mon out. Get a little fresh air. Walk an old lady across the street. Catch a game. Notch down. Life, right?

Some of you are all life, just you're nice, loving, kind. Somebody comes up. Can you explain the deity of Christ? You wanna cookie? 'Cause you got no verses, but you're nice. You got life down. We love you. We love your cookies. We'd also love for you to have a verse, you know? Get some theology. Get some doctrine. You know, it's cookies and theological statements. You gotta be about both things.

My wife and I, we're totally different. I'm doctrine, doctrine, doctrine. She's life, life, life, life, life. We're working together on this. She's a practical theologian. I'm a theoretical theologian. The other day she was ironing my shirt. I walk in. I say, "Hey, honey, what are you doing?" She says, "Loving my husband." Oooh, yeah. She says, "What are you doing?" I was like, "I was reading more books on Calvinism." Shoot. She's a practical theologian. She's life. She got that all down.

So sometimes you even find in your marriage, sometimes you marry somebody who's different than you, but you really learn from each other, and you pull together in the center, and it's good for you. Life and doctrine, life and doctrine.

So watch your life and doctrine closely. Keep an eye on it. Keep an eye on your life. Keep an eye on your doctrine. These go together. These go together. Your doctrine affects your life. Your life affects your doctrine. Persevere in them. "Keep going because if you do, you'll save both yourself and your hearers." Persevere.

Some of you have grown weary. You've lost heart. You've slowed down. You're starting to act like the kind of people that were criticizing Timothy. Timothy's the young guy who gets up in front of the church and says, "People can get saved. Churches could get planted. Lives could get transformed. Marriages could be fixed. People could be healed. Anything could happen. We serve the living God. Are you with me?" And the old people go, "I don't know. You're just young and exuberant."

Those people haven't persevered. They're not running hard to the end. They've pulled up lame like Judas Iscariot. They've given up at some point. Maybe they started well, but they have not persevered. I would beg. I would beseech. I would implore each of you to finish well.

And for us, many of us, the finish line is quite a bit out. I mean, I hope and pray that I see my great grandkids, and I'm here 50 years. I pray some day I'm sitting right there, and my great grandson is calling me to repent. That's what I wanna see, right?

You wanna persevere. You wanna finish well. You wanna finish well. As a church, as young people, we need to see the finish line, however far it is, and we need to set ourselves up to run to that point and then hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into your rest." That's what we wanna hear. This will breed not an apathy, but what it'll breed in you is a patience to where you don't need to be Billy Graham today, but you need to make progress. You need to move forward. You need to get going. You need to be motivated. You need to operate on faith and hope and love.

Jesus says in Luke chapter 6 verse 40, that when fully trained students become just like their teacher. Any of you who aspire to be a parent and teach kids, any of you who aspire to be a Christian and teach others, any of you who aspire to be used of God in any way, you need to know that what you do has implications for yourself and your hearers, for your kids, for your family, for your friends, for your Bible study, for whatever it is that you're doing for God 'cause if you are not healthy, you will breathe illness into others.

If you do not have sound doctrine, you will breed heresy and error into others. If you don't have good life of love for God and love for neighbor, you will breed apathy and indifference and hostility and mean-spiritedness and negativity into others, that people are following you. People are looking at you. And you know what? So oftentimes there's the plea to be motivated, the plea to persevere, the plea to be committed is about you connecting with God.

You know what I'm worried about? I'm worried about the people that are looking to you connecting with God. I think this is a good word for us all not to be too incredibly selfish. Do you wanna know the bottom line of why there's days when I persevere when I would rather quit? It's because of you if you want the God's honest truth. There are days when it would be a lot easier for me just to go find something else to do. There'd be a lot of other days where it'd be easy for me just to circle the wagons, huddle up, take care of my family and just ignore everyone and everything else.

But you know what I'm learning going through 1 Timothy? It's really not about me. It's about us. It's about all of us. It's not just about you. It's about him, too, and it's not just about you. It's about her. We're in this thing together. We're a family. We're a church. We're a body of Christ. And what we do has implications for ourselves, true, but also for the others who hear.

I want you guys to feel that way, and I want you to feel the beauty of it 'cause here's the good news. If people are gonna be like you and they're gonna follow you, what's gonna happen if you're making progress? Other people will be making progress. Praise God. It's a wonderful thing. As we grow, as we get bigger, as things continue to grow, some of you are automatically thinking the worst. It's because your whole life people have let you down. Sin has been committed against you. People haven't persevered. Your dad didn't persevere. He walked out. Your mom didn't persevere. She's a non-Christian. Your friends didn't persevere. They walked out on you.

We have a church filled with young people who automatically are always looking for something to go wrong. There's a pessimism that creeps into this church like it's going good, but it could stink. You know, things could fall apart. We could go broke. The roof could fall off, and midgets could fly in, and anything could happen here, you know?

It's just like, well, you know what could happen? You know what could happen? You could love Jesus, make progress. Other people could follow your example, love Jesus, make progress, and this could happen until Jesus comes back. That could happen.

I labor with intense optimism. I don't think that the sky's gonna fall. I don't think the building's gonna fall down. I don't think that I'm gonna, you know, go up in flames. I don't think that we're gonna die. I think when he says to persevere, I think that's because there's still a lot that he has left for us to do. There's a lot of people that he still intends to love. There's still a lot of lives that he intends to change. He's the living God. He's got a lot on his docket. He's invited us all along for the ride to participate with him, and he wants us to benefit, and he wants others to benefit through us.

Mars Hill, do you believe that we're gonna persevere?

Response: Yes.

Persevere. I have good news. The tomb's empty. It's already settled. God is the living God. My sins are forgiven. I belong to Christ. It's Jesus who

saved you. It's Jesus who gave you your gifts. It's Jesus who determined the times and the place that you would live. It is Jesus who has surrounded you with this church and your friends and your family. It's Jesus who has given you this Bible to read. It is Jesus who enables you to serve him by grace. It is Jesus who will permit you to persevere whole-heartedly with diligence.

Guys, it's a great, great, great God that we serve. Don't let anybody tell you different, and don't let anybody look down on you 'cause you're young and all excited. They need to repent and join you. They need to repent and join you. And here tonight, that's what we invite you to. We invite you to Jesus Christ and life in him, giving yourself to him whole-heartedly, following him with diligence, persevering and enduring, using the gift that he has given you so that you would be blessed so that we might be blessed through you. For those of you that are getting a little tired, getting a little old, getting a little settled and you're only 20, it's a good time to get back on mission with God, isn't it?

Okay, I'm gonna pray for us. You're welcome to give your sins to Jesus, receive his forgiveness. He's the savior of all men, especially those who believe. You're welcome to go get your kids to join us for worship and communion if you're a parent. You're welcome to spend some time in repentance before God if you've stopped burning brightly and if your wick is a little wet.

And then we're gonna sing. We're gonna celebrate, and we're gonna leave here with some joy, some optimism, some hope, some whole-heartedness and diligence and perseverance.

Father God, we love you. We thank you for a time to get together. God, please keep us from just being the kind of people who are always looking for the worst, thinking somehow you're not sovereign, you're not gracious, you're not good. You've been good to here, but you won't be good beyond here.

God, I pray for everyone in this room, first of all, that they would see how you have saved them in this life. Some of them should be dead. Some of them should be in rehab. Some of them should be dying from venereal diseases. Some of them should be in prison. Some of them should just be at the end of their tether, and they're not, God. They're here. They're living. They're breathing. They're hearing, and there's hope for them.

I pray, God, for those who believe. I pray that we all would believe, and I pray that in believing, God, through that faith that you give us that we would have permission to be your children and to be about your work, to love what you love, to hate what you hate, to do what you do and to avoid that which you don't do.

God, I pray for those of us who take on that attitude of being old and critical and negative and looking down on others because they're enthusiastic and excited and hopeful and optimistic. God, please change our hearts.

God, I pray for the young and emerging leaders in this church or, God, I pray that there would be continual coming forth of people who get saved and people who begin their ministries and their churches. God, I pray for 7-year-olds who lead worship and 12-year-olds who preach. I pray for 18-year-olds that burn so hot for God that the rest of us just get caught up in their wake.

God, I pray this would always be a church that would be committed to people who are young, that would extend a hand to those who may not have been trained in the world's eyes. Maybe they haven't been through seminary and ordained, but they have the spirit of God in them, and they have the hand of God upon them, and they're burning with the truth of Scripture, and they serve the living God, and God help us if we hold them back.

God, please allow us to be a church like Paul that comes alongside to shape and encourage and mentor and love and direct without quenching any of the fire or taking away any of the passion.

God, I pray that we would embrace our children and not our traditions. I pray that there would be a day when we would all be old and just paying the bills while a bunch of teenagers run hard for the hills and that the whole city would be changed, and it would be our job to love and encourage and support and to be a supply line and not the frontline.

God, we love you. We thank you that we get to be about your work. We thank you that you give us words like perseverance and progress, good words that we wanna hear. By grace, Lord God, please enable us to see them in our lives. Amen.