

**KAILUA CHRISTIAN CHURCH
SUNDAY, AUGUST 10, 2025
SERMON: FAITHFULLY NOT READY
SCRIPTURE: 1 TIMOTHY 4:10-16
REV. IRENE WILLIS HASSAN**

1 TIMOTHY 4:10-16

10 That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.

11 Command and teach these things. 12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. 13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. 14 Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

15 Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. 16 Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Sermon: Faithfully Not Ready

You might remember that a few months ago, I preached from 1 Timothy and shared something called an “apologetic” about it. In theology, *apologetics* isn't about saying “I'm sorry” for tricky Bible passages. Instead, it's about offering thoughtful, persuasive explanations for Christian beliefs and scripture, especially for folks who might feel uncomfortable or confused by what they're reading. And let's be honest: 1 Timothy can be an uncomfortable text. It's the one that says women should be quiet in church. But if you can think back to that sermon, I talked about how this letter was written in a time and place shaped by the Cult of Athena: a Roman goddess associated with aggressive, domineering female leadership. That was a real issue in ancient Turkey, where this church was forming. So the writer—most likely a student of Paul—wasn't trying to silence women for all time. He was encouraging new Christians to let go of that old, combative way of living, and instead follow Jesus' path: one of forgiveness, love, and compassion for *everyone*, not just women.

I also use 1 Timothy here today somewhat ironically as we celebrate the pastoral ordination of a young woman and release her with many blessings from our service at Kailua Christian Church today. Pastor Marina will be departing for the airport to embark on her next ministry calling with a Native American tribe in Montana after worship, and she was also ordained formally by the Pacific District of

the Foursquare Church this past Friday. Pastor Marina is not the only young woman we've celebrated and encouraged in ministry these past couple of years as we move into a place of reflection on our 2025 Pastoral Development Program—6 out of 8 of our interns since the creation of this program last year have been women.

Apologetics aside, the scripture selection from 1 Timothy 4 outlines the character that Christian leaders should embody as they move into a life of service, as Pastor Marina and her peers are preparing to do as they depart from us. The chapter begins as a continuing rebuke of the aforementioned pagan practices that were domineering, superstitious, and unChristian and then moves in the latter half of chapter 4, where we begin today, with encouragement for young leaders to keep their eyes on the way of Christ through the noise and disorder in the world around them.

Now, the question is: why did the author of 1 Timothy focus on the *young* leadership? The leader of the community addressed, Timothy, was a young man and feeling inexperienced and like the conflicts arising in his community were perhaps over his head. Given the author's description of pure chaos happening in this community during the first three chapters – to the boiling point of drawing extreme boundaries and telling the women of that church that they should just *shut up* – I could see how young Timothy was feeling reasonably overwhelmed.

The young leaders of our Pastoral Development Program had a similarly overwhelming experience as they ran the Keiki Drama Camp through the last two weeks of July. When we were still in the planning stages and didn't actually have kids at the church every day yet, I gave the interns the option to cancel all the rest of their weekly programs during the camp such as Alpha, IHS, Salsa Night, et cetera, because as a mother of two little kids who hang out regularly with a bunch of other little kids, I *knew* this camp was going to be super overwhelming. In our planning meetings, I acted as the damp towel to all their wonderful planning and vision, proposing what if scenarios such as: a kid gets scared of the bathroom and pees on a wall (which did actually end up happening), or a kid tries to wander off and jump the fence (also ended up happening), or worse case scenario we have to evacuate a bunch of scared and excited kids out of the church in an emergency (also happened). I felt that maybe their youthful inexperience with kids might blindsides them in the impending cold reality of daily child chaos.

As soon as the camp started, I saw it on the interns' faces that indeed, they hadn't quite understood the scope of how insane running a massive children's program often is, no matter how good intentioned, prayerful, and well planned you are. As we talked about last week, kids are nutty – they intentionally push your boundaries to the brink to see how far they can go; they react quickly and easily to their emotions and make poor decisions; they create mountains of problems out of things you couldn't even imagine would be potential problems, such as opening a banana incorrectly. By Tuesday of the first week, it seemed evident that the interns regretted trying to keep up the other church programs happening amidst this chaotic little community we'd created during daylight hours. I

felt panicked a number of times that I had put them too far over their heads and not only would they quit on us, they would quit ministry altogether!

But I had underestimated the faith, courage, and resiliency of these young people we contracted here for the summer. Instead of folding, each one showed up the next day with more Spirit alive in them than the day before, despite the deepening undereye circles and increasingly messy hair. Through the chaos, the interns brought their gifts in abundance—just like Timothy was reminded to do during his chaotic ministry experiences 2,000 years before.

Abigail brought her poetic artistry to design the sets and revise what was an initially terrible script, giving the camp a depth of meaning that lifted it beyond a simple children's play. Jacob's first-tier organizational skills quietly but powerfully kept everything on track—schedules, props, and even emotionally frazzled adults. Lance used his boundless energy and humor to connect with the kids in a way that defused tension and turned frustration into joy. Safiyah crafted choreography and brought the music to life, weaving a deeper story about faith and courage into every movement. And Pastor Marina brought her gift of leadership—directing the children (and adults!) through a wildly unpredictable two weeks with clarity, confidence, and love.

Each of them, in their own way, lived out the words of 1 Timothy 4 to teach the Gospel with love and faith not only in spite of obstacles, but because of them.

With faith as their shields, the interns didn't let anyone look down on them because they were young. They didn't let me discourage them with all my warnings about the chaotic nature of children. They didn't let hurdles like the sound system suddenly failing or the power going out AN HOUR before the performance or a tsunami warning let them take their eyes off the goal: which was to nurture these children in Christ's love and make a meaningful camp that would continue to impact all of us for years to come. They set an example—in their speech, in their conduct, in their love, in their faith, and in their purity of heart, not in *spite* of all the chaos, but intentionally in response to it. They committed themselves to the ministry God gave them, and the progress was visible to everyone who witnessed the beauty of their work.

These young leaders don't have kids. Many of them have limited experience with kids at all, especially that many kids all at once and trying to organize them to do a somewhat complex thing like a theatre production. Yet, they did a better job with this camp than what honestly any of the rest of us could have done.

On paper, the interns weren't ready. They don't have experience with kids, at least not in any serious way. They don't have experience with running a church. They didn't have any experience with Tsunami evacuations or coordinating with electric companies or reinstalling cabling that suddenly died (although they do now!). Yet, 1 Timothy 4 reminds us that calling isn't about being ready—it's about being faithful. It's about trusting that God is already working through the gifts placed in you, and then

offering those gifts with your whole self. Paul didn't tell Timothy to be perfect—he told him to be diligent. He told him to pay attention to his life and his teaching, to keep showing up, to persevere.

And that's what our interns did. That's what Pastor Marina, who is leaving us today, has done—and will continue to do in Montana. And that's what we're called to do, no matter our age, our title, or our experience level.

So whether you are leading a children's camp, beginning a new pastoral call, or just trying to figure out what your role in this community of faith is: don't wait until you feel old enough or experienced enough or holy enough. Instead, be faithful. Be present. Be diligent. And let the Spirit grow something beautiful through you, too.

Amen.