

The Household of God

A STUDY OF 1 TIMOTHY

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To Jack – You are almost two now. My prayer is that, when you are older, you would walk as a man of God and that the standards for elders and deacons, outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-13, would be the traits you are known for. Be strong and courageous.

The church needs men. May you be listed among them.

- TK

I dedicate this book to my father, Jack Yaeger, who went home to the Lord in November of 1998. Thanks for being such a loving and nurturing dad and friend. Your life is still such a strong influence to me in every aspect of my life yet today. I love you and I look forward to the day when I will see you again.

- MY

ABOUT THE COVER

Timothy was Paul's "true son in the faith", as stated in 1 Timothy 1:2. This paints a very intimate relationship between the writer and the recipient. This connection between Paul and Timothy is what I was hoping to capture in the art work on the cover of this study.

I tried to imagine the circumstances that led Timothy to this point in his life. He became a disciple of Paul at a relatively young age and traveled with him on several trips sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. Then came the appointed day when the father (Paul) gave the charge to the son (Timothy) to stay in Ephesus to exhort those whose teachings were contrary to the "sound doctrine" which was according to the "glorious gospel of the blessed God" - 1 Timothy 1:3-11.

A few times in the letters written to Timothy, Paul referenced Timothy's young age and his timid disposition. These two characteristics could definitely have hindered Timothy as far as leading a congregation and there must of been some opposition to Timothy as the leader or Paul would not have felt the need to write the letter. Paul encouraged Timothy not to let people look down upon him because of his age and reminded him that God gave him a spirit of power, love and self discipline. Paul was basically giving his son a pep-talk.

The composition of the painting was pretty basic in the sense that I wanted to show Timothy reading the letter. I imagine that he took the letter into a secluded place and sat down to read the words from a man he loved and respected - probably hoping for some type of reprieve. If it was me I would have wanted to read something along the lines of "hey bud, I really miss you. Why don't you grab your gear and meet me in Thessalonica. We could go hiking and fishing and figure out our next stage of the journey." Maybe Timothy was of the same mind-set. Unfortunately, he was told to "buck up" and guide by example and to remember that God provides the power to lead. You can almost picture a father putting his hand on his son's shoulder and saying "go out there and get 'em. Don't let me down".

The point in time that I tried to capture for the cover was when Timothy first started reading the letter and realized that he was to stay in Ephesus. My thinking is that he may not have been totally thrilled about Paul's marching orders - but, in time Timothy embraced this letter for both it's loving encouragement and God-breathed directives.



Mark Yaeger

PREFACE

1 Timothy is, in some respects, a counterpart to the book of Romans. Romans outlines the inner workings of salvation, 1 Timothy outlines the inner workings of the church. For a Christian to be well-grounded in the faith, an understanding of both is essential. As I have studied through these chapters in 1 Timothy, I have been confronted with a view of the church that is exciting to consider, and that often differs, quite radically in places, from that which I have known. I believe a careful, systematic study of this book will be a great help to individual Christians and to the local churches they are a part of. It is my hope that this study will lead you and your church to a greater understanding of “how one ought to behave in the household of God” (1 Timothy 3:15), and that your understanding would lead to glad obedience, and that your obedience would bring great glory to God.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom". The letters are stylized and cursive.

Tom Kelby
December 4, 2006

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

There are four parts to this eight-week study: Scripture reading, study questions to answer, study notes to read, and a weekly journal to record insights the Holy Spirit has taught you. All four are important. You will not get nearly as much out of this study if you skip any of the four. Also, do the lessons in order. Paul builds on his arguments in each verse. We need to follow the process he follows, for we will miss basic truths that are foundational to our understanding if we jump ahead.

Here's how I would recommend using this book:

On day one of each week, read the appropriate verses in Timothy we have printed in the book. We have printed the actual verses in this study book for three main reasons. First, we believe you will be able to more freely write notes and questions in the margins, which is something you may not be comfortable doing in your "everyday" Bible. Second, most Bibles break down the verses for the reader, even titling the different sections. We have printed the verses without these breaks as it is important that you dissect the passage for yourself. Finally, many Bibles include study notes. These are helpful, but they can keep you from "wrestling" with the passage yourself.

Read the passage slowly. Once you have read through the passage, read it through a second time. God has a great deal he would like to show you in his word. As you read, ask the Lord for wisdom. Why is this passage significant? What is the truth Paul is trying to get across in this passage? How do the thoughts in this passage relate to those in the verses before it? We have printed the passages with enough spacing so that you have the room necessary to write your thoughts and questions regarding the passage, however, do no writing your first time through the passage. Simply read the passage slowly. Your second read-through of the passage should be different. This time, pay close attention to the themes Paul is developing. Circle repeated words or phrases. Underline major themes. Break the passage down into smaller sections and title these sections. Write down other verses that relate to truths Paul is teaching in this passage. Avoid the use of a Bible commentary or the notes in a study Bible at this point. Do the work yourself. The Lord will give you wisdom.

On days two through five, answer the study questions. The questions will often bring you to other passages that will further illuminate the verses you are studying.

On day six, read the study notes. These notes will give you my perspective on the passage. Oftentimes in the notes you will find verses referred to, but not printed. These verses are important. Please take the time to look these verses up. It will help you in your overall understanding of Scripture.

Finally, after you've read the notes, write down any truths the Holy Spirit has taught you over the previous week.

You will find an additional section for notes in the back of this book.

Week One

INTRODUCTION

WEEK ONE

Introduction

DAY ONE

1. Why did Paul write this letter to Timothy? *1 Timothy 3:14-15*

2. What do the following verses teach us about the church?

Matthew 16:18

Ephesians 5:22-33

1 Timothy 3:14-15

3. Write a prayer, asking the Lord to bless your church and use her for his glory.

DAY TWO

4. The apostle Paul wrote the letter of 1 Timothy to a young man named Timothy. Where was Timothy from? *Acts 16:1*

5. What happened the first time Paul visited this city? *Acts 14:8-23*

6. What does this tell you about the apostle Paul?

7. Describe Timothy's family. *Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5*

8. What was Timothy's reputation among the believers in his home area? *Acts 16:2*

9. Acts 16:3 indicates that Paul had Timothy circumcised. Why do you think Paul did this? After all, Paul knew circumcision was not necessary for Timothy's salvation, and he often encouraged other believers *not* to be circumcised. Why, then, did he feel that circumcision was important for Timothy? *Acts 16:3; Galatians 5:2-6*

10. Paul praised Timothy for a certain characteristic. What was it? *Philippians 2:19-24*

11. How did Paul describe his relationship with Timothy? *Philippians 2:19-24; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2*

DAY THREE

12. 1 Timothy concerns Timothy's work in a certain city. What is the name of this city? *1 Timothy 1:3*

WEEK ONE

Introduction

There are two main characters in this letter: Paul (the sender), and Timothy (the receiver). Therefore, in order to properly understand this letter, we need to know something about both of these men. However, the background information we need stretches beyond these two men. Timothy was in the city of Ephesus when he received this letter, and the letter concerns his work within that city. It would obviously serve us well to find out, at least briefly, what we can about this city. It would also serve us well to find out what we can about the church within this city, for Timothy's work was centered within the church.

Let us briefly consider each of these – Paul, Timothy, Ephesus and the church in Ephesus – in turn:

PAUL

Much has been written about Paul and his background. No better biography exists than is found within the pages of Acts. But it is important to understand that the account within the book of Acts is not the complete story of Paul's life. It probably does not, for instance, include the time in Paul's life when he wrote this letter.² Luke's narrative ends with Paul living in Rome and awaiting trial.

He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance. Acts 28:30-31

Luke does not tell the reader what happened after the two years were completed.³ Scholars generally agree that Paul was not executed at this time. Rather, most believe he was released from this imprisonment. How this happened is not clear. It is possible his case never went to court.

... in accordance with Roman custom, he may have been automatically released without trial at the end of two years.⁴

It is also possible that his case was heard by a young, not-yet-totally-deranged Nero, who acquitted him. Of course, if his case did come to trial, Paul would not have wasted the opportunity to preach before the Roman leadership.

His plan was to turn his trial into a testimony, whether or not Caesar presided. For the first seven years of the reign when he was still under twenty-five, Nero deputed the presidency of trials to the Praetorian Prefect, the bluff straightforward Burrus or the hated Tigellinus who succeeded him. Yet in A.D. 62, he had begun to amuse himself by presiding, and thus, in the splendid star-domed justice hall of the palace on the Palatine, he may have heard Paul's reasoning of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." The red-haired Nero's descent into extravagance and lust was gathering pace. He divorced the daughter of Claudius Caesar to marry Poppaea, the Jewish proselyte previously wife of a close friend, and she encouraged Nero in vice and despotism; had Paul's trial delayed much longer, her influence most likely would have overridden justice to secure his execution.⁵

Whether the case never went to trial and he was simply released, or whether he was acquitted after a trial, the result was the same; Paul was a free man. No doubt Paul used his precious freedom as he had used his time before his imprisonment. He preached the gospel, and he encouraged and strengthened the churches.

While Paul's first missionary journeys were carefully chronicled by Luke, this fourth missionary journey (you will not find this title in your Bible or on the maps in your Bible) is somewhat of a mystery. But there are clues to where Paul may have gone. In Paul's letter to the Philippians, which was written during this first Roman imprisonment, Paul makes it clear that he plans on visiting the saints in Philippi if and when he is released.

... I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be

2 Luke's purpose in writing Acts was not to write a complete biography of Paul's life, but to present, in an orderly fashion, the early days of the church and the growth of the gospel. He traced the gospel's progress from Jerusalem to Rome.

3 "The date of Paul's first Roman imprisonment was perhaps A.D. 59-61. (Some say 60-62, others 61-63 or 62-64.)" Ralph Earle, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 11:1,2 Timothy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), p. 343.

4 Ralph Earle, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 11:1,2 Timothy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), p. 416.

5 John Pollock, *The Apostle - A Life of Paul* (Colorado Springs, CO: ChariotVictor Publishing, 1985), pp. 297-298.

honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again. Philippians 1:19-26

Later in the letter he mentions that he plans to send Timothy to the church in Philippi, and that he hopes to follow shortly after.

I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. Philippians 2:23-24

Philippi was “a leading city of the district of Macedonia” (Acts 16:12), and it appears Paul was in this district when he wrote 1 Timothy.

As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus ... 1 Timothy 1:3

In addition to Macedonia, it also appears that he spent at least some of his time during this fourth missionary journey in Crete,⁶ Troas,⁷ Miletus,⁸ and Nicopolis.⁹ Paul clearly intended to visit Ephesus during this time period.

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay ... 1 Timothy 3:14

Until I come, devote yourself to ... 1 Timothy 4:13

Whether Paul was able to come to Timothy in Ephesus is unknown. If he did, it is possible he also visited Colosse¹⁰ during this time.

It is unclear whether Paul ever ended up in Spain, as had been his goal at one time.¹¹ Paul’s letter to the Romans refers to a desire to go to Spain, but there is no indication that he was ever able to fulfill this dream.

During these few short years of freedom, Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy. It is important to understand that this letter was not written to Paul’s equal. His words are not kindly recommendations given from one pastor to another. Paul’s words here have a force mere recommendations do not have. He is telling his “child in the faith” what to do, and he expects him to do it.

Paul knows Timothy quite well. He knows his gifts, his strengths and his weaknesses. This intimate knowledge comes through in the letter again and again.

Paul’s fourth missionary journey ended abruptly. He was arrested and brought to Rome for a second imprisonment.

The early church unanimously testifies that Paul was put to death by Emperor Nero, who committed suicide in June of A.D. 68. Since Paul asked Timothy to come to him “before winter” (2 Tim 4:21), it is obvious that the second Epistle to Timothy was written not later than A.D. 67. It may have been as early as 65. This means that 1 Timothy and Titus were probably written between 62 and 66.¹²

There was to be no fifth missionary journey.

6 See Titus 1:5.

7 See 2 Timothy 4:13.

8 See 2 Timothy 4:20.

9 See Titus 3:12.

10 See Philemon 22.

11 See Romans 15:22-29.

12 Ralph Earle, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 11:1,2 Timothy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), pp. 343-344.

WEEK ONE

Introduction

TIMOTHY

Paul met Timothy in the unlikeliest place possible – Lystra, the same city where Paul was stoned during his first missionary journey.¹³ It is a remarkable testimony to the boldness of Paul that he would even consider visiting this city a second time. After all, this visit wasn't long after the first. The people who had stoned him surely still lived in the city. *Would they stone him a second time?* The thought must have crossed Paul's mind.

It is worth pausing and reflecting on this. Consider – one of Paul's greatest co-workers came from the very place where Paul had been stoned months earlier. Would you have returned to this place? Would I? How many times do we shy away from places that have been difficult for us, never guessing that God has a great blessing waiting for us in that very place? We do not know all that will transpire. Better to take what the Lord has for us – both the good and the bad – and see what he brings about, for he knows best. Very, very frequently the greatest victories are birthed in the greatest disasters. As a friend of mine likes to say, when the going gets tough, “put your head down and keep going”. You never know what will turn up when you do this. In Paul's case, Timothy turned up.

Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. Acts 16:1

As Acts 16:1 indicates, Timothy's father was not a believer. Instead, Paul refers to him as “a Greek”. His mother was Jewish, but she, along with Timothy's grandmother, had become a Christian.

I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. 2 Timothy 1:5

We are not told how Timothy became a Christian. It is possible, based on the words Paul uses when describing his relationship to Timothy, that Paul played a role in this young man's salvation.

To Timothy, my true child in the faith ... 1 Timothy 1:2

That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord ... 1 Cor. 4:17

Timothy was an extraordinary young man. He had a good reputation with the believers in his area.

He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Acts 16:2

This reputation must have been due, at least in part, to Timothy's selflessness; he truly lived for Christ, putting the needs of others before his own. This characteristic was so extraordinary, in fact, that Paul said the following about him:

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. They all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. Philippians 2:19-24

What a testimony! Would Paul be able to say the same thing about you? Would he be able to say the same thing about me? Lord, teach us what it means to serve.

“If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” Mark 9:35

As might be expected in one who considers others more than himself, Timothy prayed frequently. This can be easily seen from Paul's letters, for Paul often refers to how “we pray for you”. Since

¹³ See Acts 14:19.

Timothy was with him when he wrote many of these letters, this “we” often included Timothy. Timothy’s selflessness in prayer is reflected in Paul’s letter to the Colossians.

*We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you...
Colossians 1:3*

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you ... Colossians 1:9

Timothy also demonstrated his selflessness in how he served Paul. He traveled with him throughout the Roman Empire. Timothy was sent on missions Paul couldn’t go on himself. Sometimes Timothy was left behind to finish a task, only to have to catch up with Paul in another city. This must not have been easy. But Timothy, true to his nature, was selfless to the end of Paul’s life.

Life was not easy for Timothy. He didn’t have a home. He was prone to sickness.¹⁴ He was imprisoned for his faith.¹⁵ Early church records indicate that after Paul’s death Timothy continued to serve the church in Ephesus, where he eventually died as a martyr.

EPHESUS

Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia.¹⁶ It was one of the largest cities in the Roman Empire, and “must have had a population of about a half million” people.¹⁷ As with any Gentile city at this time, a large number of these people would have been slaves. While the city was located more than 500 miles from Israel, Ephesus nevertheless had a significant population of Jews.

The physical location of the city led to great prosperity. Blessed with a large harbor on the eastern shore of the Aegean Sea, Ephesus naturally became a center of trade.

Ephesus was the gateway to Asia. Situated at the mouth of the Cayster River, it was the entrance for shipping from the West, and the point of departure for the caravans between the Ionian coast and the East. The highway led from Ephesus across central Asia Minor through the Cilician gates to Antioch, and thence across Syria to the Euphrates valley, Persia, and India.¹⁸

As Acts 19 makes clear, however, the city was not just a center of trade. It was also a religious center – the home of Artemis of the Ephesians.¹⁹ The temple of Artemis, located in this city, was one of the Seven Wonders of the World. But for as beautiful as the temple was, however, its goddess was equally hideous. Images that have been found depict a many-breasted woman wearing a crown.²⁰

She was undoubtedly a representative of the same power presiding over conception and birth that was adored in Palestine under the name *Ashtoreth*.²¹

With great pride, the citizens regarded the goddess as their own, calling her “Artemis of the Ephesians” (Acts 19:28), and they regarded their city as the “temple keeper” (Acts 19:35) of Artemis.

The temple also appears to have housed a large stone, which the people believed had fallen from the sky in Ephesus. This “sacred stone” (Acts 19:35), which was perhaps a meteorite, was also part of the worship in Ephesus.

Worship at the temple was probably “frantic and fanatical”²² and involved sexual immorality. Worship also involved money. Businessmen were quick to profit from the goddess and the temple. The temple functioned “as a bank for the deposit and lending of money”.²³ In addition to this, silversmiths and those in similar trades developed “no little business” (Acts 19:24) constructing small silver shrines and other items related to the goddess and the temple.

However, the city’s two main industries, shipping and idolatry, were in danger. The city’s harbor was not dependable. It had a history of silting in. This had happened in previous centuries, and was again happening at the time of this letter.

14 See 1 Timothy 5:23.

15 See Hebrews 13:23.

16 It is important to understand that the Asia referred to in the New Testament is not the modern continent of Asia, but an area of land located within the borders of modern day Turkey.

17 Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1988), p. 366.

18 Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), p. 277.

19 Artemis is referred to as Diana in the KJV.

20 Some believe the breasts on the image may be ostrich eggs – another symbol of fertility.

21 Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1988), p. 484.

22 Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1988), p. 484.

23 *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia, volume 1* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1975), p. 534.

WEEK ONE

Introduction

The harbor of Ephesus was capacious, though it was already beginning to fill with silt which the Cayster brought down from the mountains. In Paul's day it was still accessible to ships of moderate size, although the large Alexandrian merchantmen had begun to avoid it.²⁴

At the same time the harbor was losing ships, the temple was losing worshipers. This exodus began in earnest during the time of Paul's ministry in Ephesus. The gospel preaching in this city was so effective, that "all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). Obviously, a good number of these people left the temple forever, seriously reducing the goddess's importance within the city and drastically reducing the profitability of the trade centered on the temple and the goddess Artemis.

THE CHURCH IN EPHEBUS

Paul's dealings with the city of Ephesus began at the tail end of his second missionary journey. He had left Corinth and set sail for Israel. While he was on the way, he stopped at Ephesus.

After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow. And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. But on taking leave of them he said, "I will return to you if God wills," and he set sail from Ephesus. Acts 18:18-21

Paul's brief stay in Ephesus was centered in the synagogue. He "reasoned with the Jews", striving to convince them that Jesus is the Messiah they had been waiting for. The Jews were so interested in this message that they asked him to stay in Ephesus. He could not; but he did leave two very able workers behind in the city – Priscilla and Aquila.

Shortly after this, another worker arrived in Ephesus. His name was Apollos.

Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately. And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus. Acts 18:24-28

Apollos's preaching was powerful, but it was incomplete. Apparently he did not know that the Messiah had already come. Upon hearing him, Priscilla and Aquila "took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately".

Notice, when Apollos "wished to cross to Achaia", he was encouraged by the "brothers". The "brothers" refers to the Christian men and women in Ephesus. In this short time period, a church had been birthed in Ephesus!

Apollos left the church in Ephesus and traveled to Corinth. Some time after this, Paul arrived in Ephesus. This was not a brief visit. In fact, Paul spent more time in Ephesus than he spent in any other city.

Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. Acts 20:31

²⁴ Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), p. 277.

While there, Paul established a sort of Bible school, “reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus” (Acts 19:9). Vast numbers of people must have come to hear Paul speaking, for Luke describes the impact of this teaching as going far beyond the city of Ephesus.

This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. Acts 19:10

What an amazing time this must have been for the church in Ephesus. Everyone – both Christians and non-Christians – was talking about the Lord Jesus! Not only were they talking because of what Paul said, they were also talking because of what he did.

And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. Acts 19:11-12

Paul was careful to point out that this power was not his. People realized Paul’s power came from the name of Jesus, and some tried to imitate Paul. Seven sons of a Jewish high priest attempted to use the name of Jesus to cast out a demon. The man with the demon overpowered them and, had they not fled, probably would have killed them. This event was like pouring gas on a flame.

And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. Acts 19:17

But these events were not just having an impact on the nonbelievers. Great fear also fell on those within the church; those harboring sin wisely repented at this time.

Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. Acts 19:18-19

Notice, the believers burned their books “in the sight of all”. Nonbelievers, as well as believers, were at this great fire. Can you imagine the stir this must have caused? People would have talked about these events nonstop. Here were supposedly rational people burning up books worth 50,000 pieces of silver! What, or more precisely, who would compel anyone to do such a thing? Artemis was no longer the name on everyone’s lips. Now it was the name of Jesus.

So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily. Acts 19:20

The church in Ephesus was also, at this early stage, known for its love. This may be seen from Jesus’ letter to the church in Ephesus recorded in the book of Revelation.²⁵ This love was not based in words alone. The Ephesian church was an active church, living out their love for the Lord and their love for the saints in practical ways.

From all appearances, it would seem the church in Ephesus was poised for a period of sustained growth and strength; but there were storm clouds gathering on the horizon. Paul warned the elders of the church about the upcoming dangers in an emotional meeting that took place in Miletus, a town just south of Ephesus.

“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.” Acts 20:28-31

²⁵ See Revelation 2:4. See also Ephesians 1:15-16.

²⁶ It appears the problem with false teachers was effectively dealt with. Later on, the Lord Jesus himself commends the church for testing “those who call themselves apostles and are not ...” (Revelation 2:2).

Week Two

1 TIMOTHY 1

WEEK TWO

1 TIMOTHY 1

DAY ONE

Read 1 Timothy 1 through twice. The first time through the chapter, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the chapter at this time. The second time through the chapter, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the chapter leaves you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

1 TIMOTHY 1

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

² To Timothy, my true child in the faith:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. ⁵ The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶ Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, ⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

⁸ Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹ in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

¹² I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷ To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

¹⁸ This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹ holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, ²⁰ among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

DAY TWO

Read 1 Timothy 1:1-7

1. According to verse one, why was Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus?

2. Why do you think Paul would tell Timothy this fact? After all, didn't Timothy know that Paul was an apostle? If Timothy didn't need to hear this, what people would need to hear this truth? What might this tell us about how Paul expected the letter to be used?

3. What title does Paul use in describing God? Is this the title you would expect him to use of God? How can Paul call God this when Jesus is also called by this title?

4. What title does Paul use in describing Jesus? What does he mean by this? Do you think of Jesus in this way?

5. Why did Paul tell Timothy to remain in Ephesus? *1 Timothy 1:3-4*

6. Based on Paul's words to Timothy in verses three through seven, what do you think was happening in the church in Ephesus at this time?

7. In verse three Paul mentions that "certain persons" were teaching "different" doctrines. In verse ten, he mentions "sound doctrine". Using a dictionary or Bible dictionary, look up the word "doctrine" and write out the definition in the space below.

WEEK TWO

1 TIMOTHY 1

8. What is the difference between a different doctrine and sound doctrine? How can a person know which is which? Where can a person learn sound doctrine? *See also Ephesians 4:11-16 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17*

9. What does this tell you about the belief that there are many right paths to God?

10. What does teaching different doctrines and devoting yourself to myths and genealogies result in? *1 Timothy 1:4*

11. How does Paul describe those who would teach other doctrines?

1 Timothy 1:6-7

1 Timothy 6:3-5

12. According to 1 Timothy 1:5, what does Paul want to happen as a result of the actions Timothy takes?

DAY THREE

Read *1 Timothy 1:8-11*

13. The law discussed in verses eight through 11 is God's law, outlined in the Old Testament books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Based on the wording of verse eight, how were the "certain persons" described in verse six using the law?

14. According to verse nine, the law exists for certain people, but not for others. Who does it exist for, and who is free from its control?

15. What do the following verses teach about the Christian's relationship to the law?

1 Timothy 1:9

Romans 7:4-6

Romans 8:2-4

Galatians 3:24-25

16. What is Jesus' relationship to the law? *Matthew 5:17*

17. Is it possible for anyone to be declared righteous by the keeping of the law? *Galatians 3:11*

18. How does Paul describe the gospel in 1 Timothy 1:11? What does he mean by this?

19. How does Paul describe God? Why would Paul use this term when describing God?

20. According to verse 11, what was Paul's relationship with the gospel?

WEEK TWO

1 TIMOTHY 1

DAY FOUR

Read *1 Timothy 1:12-17*

21. The false teachers described in verses three through 11 were relying on their own good deeds and their keeping of God's laws to obtain and maintain their relationship with God. Using verses 12 through 17 describe Paul's view of how he obtained and was maintaining his right relationship with God.

22. Using a dictionary or Bible dictionary, look up and write out the definitions for the following words.

Mercy –

Grace –

23. In addition to mercy and grace, what else did Paul receive from Christ? *1 Timothy 1:14*

24. According to verse 16, why did Paul receive mercy?

25. How does your knowledge of the mercy Christ showed to Paul impact your understanding of your relationship with Christ?

26. Based on the verses you have studied today, why do you think Paul speaks as he does in verse 17?

DAY FIVE

Read *1 Timothy 1:18-20*

27. In verse 18, Paul tells Timothy to “wage the good warfare”. Basing your answer on chapter 1, what does this good warfare include?

28. What does Paul remind Timothy to hold onto?

29. What is the consequence for those who do not hold onto these things?

30. In verse 20, Paul mentions two men whom he has handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. Using a dictionary or Bible dictionary, look up the word blasphemy and write out the definition in the space below.

31. Paul mentions Hymenaeus in 2 Timothy 2:16-18. Based on these verses, what was Hymenaeus saying that Paul considered to be blasphemy?

32. What do you think it means when it says Paul handed these men over to Satan? What was Paul hoping to accomplish by taking this action? Is this something that the church can or should practice today when encountering similar situations? *See also 1 Corinthians 5:1-5*

33. Was Paul telling Timothy to take this action with the false teachers who were in Ephesus? If not, why did he make this fact known to Timothy?

WEEK TWO

1 TIMOTHY 1

¹ See Acts 20:29-30.

WEEK TWO

1 TIMOTHY 1

DAY SIX

Read the study notes for chapter one.

1 TIMOTHY 1

OPENING WORDS

Once again, Paul is dealing with a church in trouble. Trouble, of course, comes in many shapes and sizes. The type Paul found himself consistently dealing with, and perhaps the most dangerous type there is, was brought by false teachers. This is particularly dangerous because it can set in motion generations of false teaching within the church and ultimately results in the collapse of the local church. Paul had already written letters to the Galatians and the Colossians regarding this very issue. These churches had been overrun by false teachers, whose false doctrines were confusing and weakening the saints.

Ephesus, which had once been a healthy church, was now in a similar situation. Immature leadership in the church only exacerbated the problem. The church simply had no defense against the false teachers – some of whom had come from outside the church, and some who had risen from within.¹

Paul, however, was not defenseless. He couldn't go to Ephesus and deal with the situation in person. But, as he did in other cases, he sent a trusted helper to deal with the problem. In this case, he sent Timothy. But that is not all he sent. He also sent a letter to Timothy containing detailed instructions about how to deal with the situation in Ephesus.

Paul begins the letter as he does in nine of his 13 letters² – by reminding the recipient of the letter, in this case Timothy, that he is an apostle – a “messenger with extraordinary status”,³ one of a select group of men specially gifted and sent to establish and oversee God's work. In terms of authority, the New Testament apostle was the functional equivalent of the Old Testament prophet.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope ... 1 Timothy 1:1

Why would Paul feel the need to remind Timothy that he was an apostle? Didn't Timothy already know and understand this? The answer is found in the fact that this letter was intended for a wider audience than just Timothy. This is clear from Paul's last word in the letter.

Grace be with you. 1 Timothy 6:21

The “you” in this verse is plural. Paul obviously meant others, certainly including the believers in Ephesus, to read Timothy's mail. Or, perhaps he meant Timothy to read his mail to them. The saints in Ephesus, not Timothy, needed the reminder that Paul was an apostle.

But while Paul's words were to be read by many, they were specially directed to Timothy.

To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. 1 Timothy 1:2

This decision to write an “open” letter to Timothy was a very shrewd one. With the letter in hand, Timothy was not alone in bringing help and correction to the church. Paul, in a very real sense, was also there. If the people resist Timothy, they are resisting Paul. And if they resist Paul, they are resisting God, who gave Paul authority to build up the church in Ephesus.⁴

PAUL'S CHARGE TO TIMOTHY

As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. 1 Timothy 1:3-4

2 Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philemon are the four letters in which Paul does not refer to his apostleship. This is probably because the churches in Philippi and Thessalonica were loyal to Paul and Philemon was a personal letter to a close friend.

3 Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, F.W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature - Third Edition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 122.

4 See 2 Corinthians 13:10.

These verses indicate that Paul and Timothy had spent time discussing the situation in Ephesus before Paul departed to Macedonia. They must have talked about specific people, referred to as “certain persons” here, who were teaching “different” doctrines. Names were named, I’m sure. Specific wrong teachings were discussed. How did Paul want Timothy to deal with these people? He was to “charge” them with two specific commands.

Notice that forms of the word translated “charge” are used three different times in this chapter – in verse three as a verb, and in verses five and 18 as nouns. This is all evidence that Paul is not expecting Timothy to come into the church softly. He has sent him to bring things under control.

What are the two charges Timothy is to make? First, he is to charge certain persons “not to teach any different doctrine”. Second, he is to charge them “not to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies”. Let’s look at these charges one at a time.

First, Timothy was to charge the certain persons not to “teach any different doctrine”. The fact that these people were teaching another doctrine implies that there is a standard doctrine which the church is to hold onto. Paul calls this standard doctrine “sound doctrine” (1 Timothy 1:10). He uses the same phrase in Titus 1:9 and Titus 2:1 and a closely related phrase in 2 Timothy 4:3. In fact, sound doctrine may well be the theme of all three pastoral epistles.

Paul does not elaborate on this standard doctrine here; after all, the point of the charge is not to outline the normative beliefs of the church, but to stop the people from teaching other doctrines. Also, notice that Paul’s charge to Timothy was not that Timothy engage in a debate with these people, he was to command them to stop what they were doing.

Second, Timothy was to charge these people not to “devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies”. These people were addicted to false stories and endless lists of names and dates which they considered essential to the faith. Obviously, Paul did not consider these stories and genealogies essential to the faith. He considered them to be quite the opposite, saying that these things “promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith”.

Speculations are “what ifs”. What ifs do not build the kingdom of God. Stewardship, that is the managing of God’s gifts by faith, builds the kingdom. God’s time, gifts and resources are not being rightly stewarded when we spend our time in vain speculations about new and different teachings. Precious time is wasted chasing invisible rabbits down trails that don’t exist rather than growing in grace and love and doing the work of the kingdom.

Paul’s judgment of the teachings of these certain people could not be harsher. He says they are teaching “different” doctrines and myths. They love speculating about “myths”. In verse six, he says that these people have “wandered away into vain discussion”. In verse seven, he says that they do not understand “what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions”. In every way, these people have missed the mark.

But is missing the mark that bad? Does the damage it creates warrant the actions Paul tells Timothy to take? It may seem as if Paul is overreacting here. By commanding these people to stop, it could appear he is being a bit controlling. More than that, it may seem downright unloving. After all, confronting false teachers will involve subjecting them to some level of public embarrassment, won’t it? Wouldn’t it be easier to just let them go the way they’re going and hope no larger problems develop? Wouldn’t that be the loving thing to do?

The answer is an emphatic NO! The unloving thing is to let the false teachers keep teaching. The unloving thing is to let the dear saints continue to be confused by the stream of lies and deception. The unloving thing is to watch the saints idle their time away in vain discussions when they should be stewarding God’s gifts and building the kingdom. The unloving thing is to shirk your responsibility to God and the saints in the church and to wish the problem away.

But the loving thing is to confront and silence the false teachers. That is exactly what Paul says in verse five.

WEEK TWO

1 TIMOTHY 1

The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. 1 Timothy 1:5

Paul is not being overly controlling. He isn't seeking his own glory. The end he has in sight is love. Love isn't controlling. It doesn't insist on its own way. It "issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith". Paul had these things. And he did not want those who had abandoned these things to be teaching the saints.

Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions. 1 Timothy 1:6-7

But these people didn't just have heart and conscience and faith problems. They also had knowledge problems. Simply put, they didn't know what they were talking about. Their confidence could not make up for their error-laden theology.

What, exactly, were these certain people in Ephesus teaching? It appears to have been centered on the law. In verse seven, Paul said that these people were "desiring to be teachers of the law". *Teacher of the law* is a title better suited to a teacher within Judaism than Christianity, for Christians have been released from the law.

But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit. Romans 7:6

Why would any Christian want to be called a teacher of the law? We have been set free from the law. Yet these people in Ephesus, functioning within the church, were striving to bring people back under the law.

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

This is not to say that the law no longer has a purpose. It most definitely does have a purpose. In verses eight through 11, Paul describes the purpose of the law. He does this because the false teachers were not using the law as God intended. They were, as Paul says with a pun, not using the law lawfully.

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient ... 1 Timothy 1:8-9

The law does not exist for the just. This is wonderful news for the Christian, for we have been justified by the blood of Jesus. Therefore, the law does not exist for the Christian. It exists for the "lawless and disobedient". Paul then goes on to list specific examples of those for whom the law exists.

... for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. 1 Timothy 1:9-11

Why does the law exist for these people? Because they refuse the righteousness offered by Jesus and are seeking to establish their own righteousness through their own works. By refusing Jesus, they have left themselves to contend with the unbending standards of the law. The law is their only hope, but it is a vain hope, for no one, apart from Christ, is able to keep the law.

But Jesus is, as Paul says in Romans 10:4, "the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes". We have been set free from the law the false teachers love peddling.

I don't know why Christians are so eager to get back under the law. False teachers peddling the "let's get back under the law" doctrine should be about as successful as a traveling salesman would be trying to peddle training wheels (I'm sorry, I couldn't help myself) to riders in the Tour de France. Training wheels have no use for a bike racer. Their only purpose is in helping you to learn to ride. In the same way, the law's purpose was to bring you to Christ. Now that you know him, it has no further purpose in your life. It doesn't exist for you. It exists for the lawless and disobedient.

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL AND THE BLESSED GOD

Fortunately, the theme of this letter is not entirely negative. Within the space of just a few words, Paul lifts his reader out of the malaria-infested swamp of false teaching and gives us a glimpse of the wonders of the gospel, and of God in all his glory.

... in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. 1 Timothy 1:11

First, notice that Paul calls the gospel "glorious". The idea here is of the shining greatness, splendor, and magnificence of the gospel itself. Do you see the gospel as such? Paul did.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." Romans 1:16-17

Second, Paul calls God "blessed". This is a description well worth considering.

Paul acclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ as "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1 Timothy 1:11). Rotherham felicitously translates it, "the gospel of the glory of the happy God." This rather beatific title describes God not as One who is the object of blessing, but as One who enjoys in himself the fullness of joy. He lives in the sublime atmosphere of his own eternal happiness (Hebrews 1:9). Jesus himself possesses a surplus of joy that he has bequeathed to his disciples, a storehouse which can supply us with unique blessings for our lives.

The title "blessed" is applied to God for two reasons: (a) He is entirely *self-sufficient*. We are constantly striving to become what we are not, in order to supply what we lack. God needs nothing and no one to complement him. (b) He is *absolute perfection*. The sum total of all virtues is resident in him. He is the God of all blessedness, in whom nothing is lacking or in excess. Thus Paul encourages Timothy to believe that the gospel he is to preach arises out of an environment of joy – the happy heart of God, which is perpetually overflowing.⁵

PAUL CONSIDERS HIS OWN LIFE

Paul's words regarding "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" in verse 11 launch him into a consideration of his own life.

I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 1:12-14

Paul does not consider himself worthy of the honor he has received. He was formerly God's enemy. But Jesus judged him faithful and appointed Paul to his service. Even though Paul had been "a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent", grace overflowed for him.

It is important to note the difference between Paul's relationship with the Lord and that of the false teachers. The false teachers relied on works to obtain and maintain their relationship with God. Paul makes it clear that he did not deserve any grace or mercy, but that it was given to him nonetheless. Paul, in no way, considers himself a worthy recipient of God's grace. He considers himself the leading sinner.

⁵ J. Oswald Sanders, *Paul the Leader* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1984), p. 70

WEEK TWO

1 TIMOTHY 1

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. 1 Timothy 1:15-16

Those who would receive God's grace know they cannot earn it. They know they are the worst of sinners.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3

A true understanding of our nature and of the mercy and grace of God leads us to praise him and him alone.

To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. 1 Timothy 1:17

THE CHARGE REITERATED

After directing his attention to "the King of ages", Paul returns his gaze to Timothy.

This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. 1 Timothy 1:18-19

Paul reminds Timothy that he is entrusting "this charge" to him. The charge is the same charge outlined in verses three and five – the charge that "certain persons" stop teaching their different doctrine and stop focusing on myths and genealogies.

Timothy may be nervous about doing this. After all, false teachers tend to be bold and arrogant and difficult to deal with. But Paul encourages Timothy, reminding him of prophecies that were previously spoken about him. I don't know what these prophecies were, but I imagine they had something to do with the Lord using Timothy to bring churches back to health, or something of that nature. Whatever the prophecies were, Paul feels that it is important to remind Timothy of them. The encouragement of the prophecies is a weapon he must use to wage "the good warfare".

Paul also reminds Timothy to hold onto "faith and a good conscience". This is the second time Paul refers to faith and a good conscience in this opening chapter. In verse five, he mentions that love "issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith". In verse six, he tells Timothy that the false teachers have swerved from these things. Timothy, then, is to hold onto what the false teachers have swerved from.

What happens when we don't hold on to faith and a good conscience? Our faith is not only damaged, it is destroyed. Two examples of this are given in verses 19 and 20.

By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. 1 Timothy 1:19-20

Hymenaeus is referred to in 2 Timothy.

But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. 2 Timothy 2:16-18

Alexander could be the Alexander referred to in 2 Timothy 4.

Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. 2 Timothy 4:14-15

False teachers do not go unpunished. In fact, they punish themselves, steering their own faith onto the rocks. If that isn't enough, Paul handed these men over to Satan, "that they may learn not to blaspheme".

Paul does not say how he handed these men over to Satan, but he clearly felt that their blasphemy, their "disrespect shown or harm done to a deity's reputation",⁶ was of such a serious nature that they needed the harshest punishment he could deal out.

This is the second time Paul refers to handing one over to Satan. The other is in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5.

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. 1 Corinthians 5:1-5

This case is obviously different from the case Paul refers to in 1 Timothy. In 1 Timothy, the "crime" is blasphemy. In 1 Corinthians, it is sexual immorality of such a foul nature that it would not be tolerated even among the unsaved. Are there similarities between the two? I think there are. In both cases, the sin is particularly heinous – a reproach to the church and damaging to the saints. In both cases, Paul's intention is that Satan would teach these people a lesson they wouldn't hear in any other way. They ignored the voices of godly men urging them to repentance. Could they also ignore the whip of Satan?⁷

Timothy's charge is also our charge. We must stand for the gospel as he stood for it. All of this leads to a practical question: What does the church do to protect itself from false teachers? The answers are actually quite simple. If the church is to take a stand against false teachers, it is only logical that the church must know its teachers and what its teachers believe and what its teachers are teaching.

Paul knew that the only way to deal with the false teachers was head on. Do we also know this fact?

Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in – who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery – to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. Galatians 2:4-5

The battles we win today are not just for today, they are for tomorrow. The gospel must be preserved for those who will follow after us. It is preserved when we teach truth and take a stand against those who have swerved from it.

DAY SIX (CONTINUED)

This week, the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

6 Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, F.W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature - Third Edition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 178.

7 These passages prove, once again, that Satan is not in control. Here, he is used by Paul for godly purposes. How frustrating this must be for him!

Week Three

1 TIMOTHY 2

DAY ONE

Read 1 Timothy 2 through twice. The first time through the chapter, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the chapter at this time. The second time through the chapter, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the chapter leaves you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

1 TIMOTHY 2

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. ⁷For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

⁸I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ⁹likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. ¹¹Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹²I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. ¹³For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

DAY TWO

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4

1. What does Paul urge in verses one and two?

2. Why do you think he says that the church is to do this “First of all”?

3. Is this true of your church? Is it true of you?

4. Why do you think Paul singles out “kings and all who are in high positions” as needing prayer?

WEEK THREE

1 TIMOTHY 2

5. What benefit does following Paul's instructions here bring to the church? *1 Timothy 2:2*

6. What is God's desire for mankind? *1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9*

7. This desire is tied to the church's need to pray for all people. What might this say about the importance of prayer in regard to world evangelism? *See also Luke 10:2*

DAY THREE

Read *1 Timothy 2:5-7*

8. What is the truth God wants all men to come to the knowledge of?
1 Timothy 2:4-6; John 14:6; John 17:3

9. Basing your answer on verses four through six, how would you say that the church is to pray for all people?

10. Write a prayer out for the leaders in your area, asking God to do these things.

11. In verse seven Paul says that he was "appointed a preacher and an apostle" for a specific reason. What is that reason?

12. Why would Paul say that he is telling the truth and not lying? What, specifically, is he talking about? What might this say about the conditions in the church in Ephesus and his acceptance by the people?

DAY FOUR

Read *1 Timothy 2:8-10*

13. Verses eight through 15 include instructions specific to men and to women. In verse eight, what does Paul instruct the men to do?

14. How are they to do this?

15. What, specifically, are the men to pray for (remember verses one and two)?

16. How, practically, can this happen when the church is gathered?

17. Is this happening in your church?

18. What does Paul instruct the women to do in verses nine and ten?

WEEK THREE

1 TIMOTHY 2

19. What does Peter say about this same issue in 1 Peter 3:3-4?

20. Why do you think Paul would address these concerns to women in particular? Do you think these instructions are as necessary today as they were when this letter was written?

21. How can a culture of inward, rather than outward, beauty be cultivated within the church?

DAY FIVE

Read *1 Timothy 2:11-15*

22. Paul's instructions in verses 11 through 15 concern women and their relation to learning, teaching and holding authority in the church. What might this say about the conditions in the church in Ephesus at the time this letter was written?

23. How is a woman to learn? *1 Timothy 2:11*

24. What restrictions did Paul place on women ministering in the church? *1 Timothy 2:12*

25. What reasoning does he give for the restrictions he places on women? *1 Timothy 2:13-14*

26. Many would say that these restrictions have been lifted because our culture is different from the culture in which this letter was written (i.e. – some say that women were not educated during that time period). Do you think Paul’s reasoning in verse 13 allows for a belief that these restrictions were culturally based?

27. What does Paul say in regard to women teaching in his letter to Titus? *Titus 2:3-5*

28. How can you reconcile Paul’s words in Titus with his words in 1 Timothy 2:12?

29. In Acts 18:24-28, we read about Priscilla teaching Apollos. How can you reconcile her teaching of Apollos with Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 2:12?

30. Why do you think Paul mentions that Eve was deceived in verse 14? How does Paul’s statement here further the argument he is making?

31. We know salvation is based on faith. So why would Paul say that women “will be saved through childbearing”? What might he be teaching in this verse?

32. What do you think would happen in the church if Paul’s words here were followed? How do you think the culture at large would respond to this?

WEEK THREE

1 TIMOTHY 2

DAY SIX

Read the study notes for chapter two.

1 TIMOTHY 2

Now that Paul has gotten the rather sticky business of the false teachers out of the way, at least temporarily, he is ready to move on to the non-apostate church – those who have not swerved into error. What are his instructions for the “average” Christian?

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Paul’s instructions in this chapter concern public worship – how “one ought to behave in the household of God” (1 Timothy 3:15).

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 1 Timothy 2:1-2

“First of all” could mean do this first. Paul could be telling the Ephesian Christians to start with prayer when they are gathered together. It could also mean put this first. If this is the case, which I believe it is, Paul is telling the Ephesian Christians to make prayer their number one priority. How different this is from our normal ways of “doing church.” We must become a people of prayer.

Notice that Paul lists four “types” of prayer in this verse.

In the NT we find seven different Greek nouns used for prayer. Four of them occur in this verse.¹

What are these four things? The fourth type of prayer in the list, “thanksgivings”, is easy enough to determine. We are always to be thanking God.² Thankfulness is a sign of faith, as it is an acknowledgment that God has heard our prayers, he has answered them and that we have gratefully received the answer.

But what about the other three words for prayer? The lines between them are a bit fuzzy. In some sense, all three words can refer to the same thing. They all are translated “prayer” in the New Testament.

It is not possible to distinguish precisely the provinces covered by the four words here used for prayer. The first three have so much in common that little useful purpose is served in defining their respective meanings; yet there may be significance in the fact that *deé seis* (*supplications*) brings out a clearer sense of need that *proseuchai* (*prayers*), the more general word for prayer, while *enteuxeis* (*intercessions*) is a regular term for petition to a superior. The very variety of terms serves to emphasize the richness of this spiritual exercise.³

These prayers are to be prayed for all people. No one is to be left out. Your neighbor qualifies. As does your plumber. Muslims qualify. As do school children. But, while reminding the church to pray for all people in general, there is one group in particular that Paul does single out – “kings and all who are in high positions”.

Why would he single out kings and those in high positions? Probably because their lives and decisions impact our lives in a greater manner than the “average” person’s life does. Our ability to lead peaceful and quiet lives and to worship freely depends, to a large degree, on those governing us.

The purpose of this is very logical and significant: “that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and honesty.” The fact that we are permitted to assemble peaceably for public worship is dependent on our rights under law – law as upheld and enforced by our legislators, administrators, and judicial leaders. We ought to pray for them, and also thank God for them.⁴

1 Ralph Earle, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume 11:1,2 Timothy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), p. 357.

2 See Philippians 4:6; Colossians 3:17; Colossians 4:2.

3 Donald Guthrie, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), p. 69.

4 Ralph Earle, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume 11:1,2 Timothy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), p. 357.

It is interesting to note that Paul wrote these words when Nero was emperor of Rome. He, surely, was prayed for by the churches many times, yet life under his reign became increasingly difficult. However, this did not excuse the church from her responsibility to pray for him. Who knows how God worked in Nero's life in response to these prayers? Nero chose not to respond to God's work in his life. Like Paul, he kicked against the goads – the sharp pricks from God meant to bring him to repentance.⁵ Unlike Paul, however, he never repented. But surely these goads are given by God, at least in part, in response to our prayers. As we pray, he goes to work in a situation on his behalf – which works to our good.

It is not for the church to determine whom to pray for. We are to pray for “all people”, good and bad, because God wants all to be saved, and, wonder of wonders, he has made our prayers a part of that process.

This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 1 Timothy 2:3-4

God's desire is that all would be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. This is not just any truth God wants people to come to a knowledge of. Paul explains what this truth is in verses five through seven.

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. 1 Timothy 2:5-6

This is about the simplest explanation of the gospel you will ever find. Our understanding of truth starts with God – “there is one God”. Many in Paul's time believed in many gods. Many today believe in no god. But the truth we must understand is that there is one God. But that truth is not sufficient for us, for we must also know that we cannot freely go to the one God. We need a mediator – someone who will go between us and God. Job understood this truth.

For he is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him, that we should come to trial together. There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both. Job 9:32-33

Praise God! We do have a mediator. He is the man Christ Jesus.

Our understanding of truth is brought to completion (in a preliminary sense) when we know that the man Christ Jesus “gave himself as a ransom for all”. Jesus died in behalf of all men. But do all men know this? No they don't. That is why we must pray.

Do you understand that it is a miracle for anyone – ANYONE – to know these things? Left to ourselves, none of us would ever seek God. None of us would ever come to an understanding of God and his ways.

... no one understands; no one seeks for God. Romans 3:11

If we understand this, we will pray together. We will pray that all will be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

Of course, we must not believe that we are shouldering the entire burden ourselves. God is actively working to see all men come to this knowledge. This is why he appointed Paul.

For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. 1 Timothy 2:7

The word translated “preacher” in this verse has a greater force behind it than we normally might give it. It is helpful to know that the word is more literally translated as “herald”.

⁵ See Acts 26:14.

WEEK THREE

1 TIMOTHY 2

The term *kéryx* (“herald”) was used for “a messenger vested with public authority, who conveyed the official messages of kings, magistrates, princes, military commanders, or who gave a public summons or demand, and performed various other duties” (Thayer, p. 346). In the NT it signifies “God’s ambassador, and the herald or proclaimer of the divine word” (ibid.). So the “preacher” (KJV) is one who makes a public proclamation for the King of kings. He is not to air his own opinions or debate other people’s ideas but proclaim the Word of God. What a glorious privilege and what an awesome responsibility!⁶

Did you notice the parenthetical comment Paul makes in verse seven? Why did he feel the need to tell Timothy that he is telling the truth and not lying? Once again (remember 1 Timothy 1:1), I don’t think this statement was for Timothy’s benefit. I believe Paul said this for the church in Ephesus. Obviously, some within the church did not consider Paul to be an apostle. Paul vigorously refutes this thought, saying that God appointed him as a preacher and an apostle.

PAUL’S INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING MEN

In the last eight verses of this chapter Paul addresses men and women separately. These are specific behaviors that Paul either wants to see in the household of God or that he does not want to see.

In verse eight Paul reiterates what has already been said in verse one; the church is to pray. In this case, however, Paul specifically tells the men to pray.

I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling ... 1 Timothy 2:8

But not only are they to pray, they are to pray with the right attitude. They should lift “holy hands”, the idea being that the one praying is clean from any unconfessed sin. And there should be no arguing and quarreling amongst ourselves as we pray. We must first reconcile our differences and then bring our gift before the Lord. Jesus’ words in Matthew 5 are applicable to this situation.

“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” Matthew 5:23-24

The fact that Paul brings up anger and quarreling here may be a hint of what was happening in Ephesus at this time. Prayer was being hindered because the men were quarreling with each other – presumably about the false teaching.

PAUL’S INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING WOMEN

The women are given two sets of instructions. It would appear, at first glance, that Paul is treating the women harshly (particularly in the second set of instructions). In fact, based on these verses and others like them, some have called Paul a *misogynist* (a woman hater). That is certainly not the case. In these verses, Paul is giving God’s desires for women in the church. God’s desires, as they are always based on love, are always for our best, and that is the case with these instructions for women. We must always remember that “All Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Timothy 3:16). These words are not Paul’s ideas. They are God’s. If we have a problem with Paul’s words here, we must rightly place the “blame” for them on God, for he, not Paul, breathed them out.

The first set of instructions concerns how women are to adorn themselves.

... likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. 1 Timothy 2:9-10

The thoughts expressed here are similar to those found in 1 Peter.

⁶ Ralph Earle, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume 11:1,2 Timothy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), p. 357.

Do not let your adorning be external – the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing – but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. 1 Peter 3:3-4

I don’t believe Paul is saying that braided hair or gold or pearls should never be worn by a godly woman, any more than I believe that Peter was saying that a woman must not put on clothing (that is what he literally said, but that assuredly is not what he meant). God created gold and pearls, after all. He obviously has no problem with either one, for they both will be prominently displayed in the New Jerusalem. They are not unclean in themselves. However, they can be focused on and used inappropriately, and this is what both Paul and Peter warn against in these verses.

A woman’s adorning must, first and foremost, be internal. Proper adorning for a godly woman is, according to Paul, good works. According to Peter, proper adorning is a gentle and quiet spirit. Taken together, we see that a godly woman will gently and quietly live a life of good works before her God. To do this, she must consider her inward appearance more than her outward appearance, for this is where God, the one whom she is seeking to please, focuses his attention.

“For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” 1 Samuel 16:7

This is true beauty. But the world does not recognize this type of beauty. The message women hear almost constantly is focused on the external. Our culture has almost deified the beauty of women. Magazines for women focus, in great measure, on appearances. Advertising is constantly attempting to convince women to somehow change their appearance. But is this what God desires for us? If we have a need to show off our external appearance, we must question whom we are attempting to gain glory for. Undue focus on external appearances is out of place for a woman of God (and a man of God). We are not to draw attention to ourselves. We are to draw all attention to Christ.

This is not to say, of course, that Christian women cannot wear gold or pearls or braided hair. It is saying that true adorning is inward, not outward. This must be a Christian woman’s first priority. These things must be taught to the younger women in the church, for they will not hear this message from the world. The primary teachers of this, I believe, will be the older women – those who have learned these truths for themselves.

Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Titus 2:3-5

The second set of instructions for women concern appropriate and inappropriate behavior for women within the church. These are difficult verses, especially in light of today’s “politically correct” culture. But, as people of the Book, we must learn to grapple with difficult verses.

Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. 1 Timothy 2:11-12

The appropriate behavior is stated first: a woman is to “learn quietly with all submissiveness”. Paul follows this with the inappropriate behavior: women are not to “teach or to exercise authority over a man”. He then returns to appropriate behavior again: “she is to remain quiet”.

Why would Paul place such a restriction on the ministry of women? Was it primarily because of the false teachers who were then holding sway in Ephesus? In other words, was he prohibiting women in Ephesus from teaching and holding authority over a man because they had been deceived by the false teachers? Or was this a restriction that was applicable to that time period because women

WEEK THREE

1 TIMOTHY 2

were not as highly educated as men were? And if that were the case, would the same restriction apply in cultures where women have the same educational opportunities as men?

The answers to these questions may be found in verses 13 and 14. These verses are connected to verses 11 and 12 by the word “for”, meaning they are an explanation of why Paul does not “permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man”.

For Adam was formed first, then Eve... 1 Timothy 2:13-14

The first reason Paul gives for the ministry restrictions he places on women is not cultural. It is based on the order of creation. Adam was formed first, therefore, in God’s creative order, man is to lead.

Douglas Moo, in an insightful chapter in the book, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, makes the following observations about these verses.

Both the logic of this passage and the parallel in 1 Corinthians 11:3-10 make this clear: for Paul, the man’s priority in the order of creation is indicative of the headship that man is to have over women. The woman’s being created after man, as his helper, shows the position of submission that God intended as inherent in the woman’s relation to the man, a submission that is violated if a woman teaches doctrine or exercises authority over a man.⁷

By sighting the order of the creation of man and woman as his reasoning for the injunctions, Paul effectively dismantles any arguments that may be given about these restrictions being merely cultural and only applicable to certain times or places. And, based on Paul’s reasoning here, these are not restrictions because of the curse of sin, and therefore temporary aberrations that the work of Jesus on the cross corrected. God’s choice in the order in creation took place before the fall, indicating that God’s intended order in leadership is not rooted in sin, and therefore to be resisted, but is rooted in his divine plan, and is therefore to be embraced.

Douglas Moo’s comments prove helpful here.

For by rooting these prohibitions in the circumstances of creation rather than in the circumstances of the fall, Paul shows that he does not consider these restrictions to be the product of the curse and presumably, therefore, to be phased out by redemption. And by citing creation rather than a local situation or cultural circumstance as his basis for the prohibitions, Paul makes it clear that, while these local or cultural issues may have provided the *context* of the issue, they do not provide the *reason* for his advice. His *reason* for the prohibitions of verse 12 is the created role relationship of man and woman, and we may justly conclude that these prohibitions are applicable as long as this reason remains true.⁸

The second reason Paul gives for the ministry restrictions he places on women may be found in verse 14.

... and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. 1 Timothy 2:14

Paul’s words are almost shockingly straightforward: Adam was not deceived, but Eve was deceived. This, according to Paul, is a second reason women are not permitted “to teach or to exercise authority over a man”. But why should Eve’s deception impact the lives of other women? They, after all, were not deceived in the garden. Only Eve was deceived. Yet Paul uses Eve’s deception as one of the reasons why he doesn’t permit ANY women “to teach or to exercise authority over a man”. What is Paul trying to tell us here?

Wayne Grudem, in his book *Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism*, presents two possible interpretations of this verse.

7 John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Editors), *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), p. 190.

8 John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Editors), *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), pp. 190-191.

There are two main interpretations of 1 Timothy 2:14. The first interpretation says that verse 14 refers to a role reversal in the Fall. The idea is that Eve took the initiative and made the decision to eat the forbidden fruit on her own, but in doing this she took a leadership role that belonged to Adam. In this way, Paul is pointing out what happens when women take the leadership role that God has reserved for men.⁹

While this interpretation is possible, the second possibility seems to be more likely (and, undoubtedly, more politically incorrect). According to this interpretation, Paul is simply saying that Eve's reaction to the snake in the garden demonstrates an inherent difference between the sexes – a difference which precludes women from teaching or exercising authority over a man within the church. Grudem explains this second possibility in the following way:

The second major interpretation of verse 14 is that Paul is saying something about the nature of men and women as God created them. This is by far the most common viewpoint in the history of interpretation of this passage. While some authors have wrongly understood this text to be teaching the intellectual inferiority of women, that misunderstanding is certainly not necessary to the passage, nor am I aware of any modern author who holds that view today. Rather, this interpretation says that while God made men and women (in general) with equal intellectual abilities, there are still differences in preferences and inclinations, and those differences are consistent or “congruent” with God's purposes in entrusting leadership in the church to men.¹⁰

Grudem goes on to say the following:

This explanation seems to me to best suit the wording of 1 Timothy 2:14. Paul is saying that women should not teach or have authority over men in the congregation of God's people for two reasons: (1) Because God gave Adam a leadership role when He created him first and Eve second (v. 13), and (2) God gave men, in general, a disposition that is better suited to teaching and governing in the church, a disposition that inclines more to rational, logical analysis of doctrine and a desire to protect the doctrinal purity of the church, and God gave women, in general, a disposition that inclines more toward a relational, nurturing emphasis that places a higher value on unity and community in the church (v. 14). Both emphases are needed, of course, and both men and women have some measure of both tendencies. But Paul understands the kinder, gentler, more relational nature of women as something that made Eve less inclined to oppose the deceptive serpent and more inclined to accept his words as something helpful and true.¹¹

If this interpretation is true, which I believe it is, then churches put themselves in a dangerous position when these prohibitions are ignored. When this occurs, not only is the church in direct disobedience to God's word, it is also more likely to be led astray by false teaching. Far better to obey his words, however unpopular they may be, and to flourish, than to disobey his words and court disaster.

Paul is not looking to restrict the women. He does not want to ruin their lives. The opposite is true. He wants to help them and to see them flourish in the roles God has for them. And this is the point he makes in verse 15.

Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. 1 Timothy 2:15

Paul is not saying that childbirth grants salvation to a mother. This is obvious for two reasons: one, if this were the case, women who are not married or who never have had children could not be saved, and two, if this were the case, he would be contradicting many other verses on salvation and how it is truly received. I believe he is simply making the point that the role most of the women in the church in Ephesus had – being married and raising children – is not a low, demeaning task to be thrown off. The opposite is true: it is God-honoring and holy. Paul wants the women to stop trying to take roles which are not theirs to take, namely, teaching the men and exercising authority over the men within the church, and to embrace the roles which are theirs.

9 Wayne Grudem, *Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Publishers, 2006), p. 37.

10 Wayne Grudem, *Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Publishers, 2006), pp. 37-38.

11 Wayne Grudem, *Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Publishers, 2006), pp. 38-39.

Week Four

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

WEEK FOUR

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

DAY ONE

Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7 through twice. The first time through the verses, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the verses at this time. The second time through the verses, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the verses leave you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

2 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

DAY TWO

Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7

1. In 1 Timothy 3, Paul focuses on the topic of leadership within the church. In verses one through seven, Paul considers qualifications for “overseers”. Why do you think Paul addresses this topic with Timothy, and why does he do it at this point in the letter?

2. How does he describe the task of being an overseer in 1 Timothy 3:1? What might this say about the person who would fill this role?

3. What is an overseer? Do you find any hints about what he does in these seven verses?

4. Read Acts 20:17-38. Based on these verses, what is the job description of an overseer?

5. Luke, in writing the account of this passage in Acts 20, calls the overseers by a different name in verse 17. What is it? What might this say about those who would fill this role?

DAY THREE

6. To what profession does Peter compare the position of elder in 1 Peter 5:1-5?

7. How does he describe Jesus in this passage?

8. What does this say about an elder's authority?

9. Paul uses the same profession to describe the work of an elder in Acts 20:28-32. What is it about an elder's job that would lead both Peter and Paul to write about it in these terms?

10. Jesus was not speaking of elders in John 10:11-14. However, how might his words here be applied to those who would serve as elders?

11. Jesus' words to Peter in John 21:15-19 concern this same topic. Why do you think Jesus uses this language to describe those who would follow him? What specifically was Jesus asking Peter to do?

12. How might the LORD's words in Ezekiel 34:1-10 serve as a warning to those who would serve as elders today?

WEEK FOUR

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

WEEK FOUR

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

13. According to Peter, how is an elder to serve? *1 Peter 5:1-5*

14. What is the reward an elder receives for serving well? *1 Peter 5:4*

15. What is the proper response of the believer to the elder? *1 Peter 5:5; Hebrews 13:17*

DAY FOUR

16. Based on 1 Timothy 5:17, what are three of the responsibilities an elder was to fill in the church?

17. What role did the council of elders play in Timothy's own life? *1 Timothy 4:14*

18. Why did Paul leave Titus in Crete? *Titus 1:5-9*

19. What were the requirements Paul told Titus that an overseer must meet?

20. What are the requirements Paul told Timothy that an overseer must meet? *1 Timothy 3:1-7*

21. Are these standards too high? Where do people who are eligible to meet these standards come from?

DAY FIVE

22. Based on the verses you have read this week, how would you summarize an elder's role in the church?

23. Are there people filling roles like this in your church?

24. What do you think happens in a church where there are no elders?

25. Are those who might fill this role in your church held to the same standards Paul outlines in Timothy and Titus?

26. What do you think happens when a person who does not meet the qualifications we have examined this week is put in the position of an elder?

27. In many churches, the people nominate other people to fill this role. Knowing God's standards for elders, what responsibility does this place on those considering others as elders?

WEEK FOUR

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

DAY SIX

Read the study notes for chapter three verses one through seven.

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

In 1 Timothy 2, Paul indicated that he does not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man in the church. It may appear, at least to some, that Paul is overly restricting leadership within the church. After all, if we are to follow the Scriptures, the potential pool from which leadership may be drawn in the church has just been cut in half.

However, chapter two was just the beginning of the restrictions Paul places on leadership. The standards go far beyond merely being male. In chapter three Paul outlines the qualifications for those who would serve as overseers and deacons in the church. In this lesson, we will consider the standard for overseers.

THE STANDARD FOR OVERSEERS

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 1 Timothy 3:1

Paul starts out by repeating a saying which was apparently used in the church at that time: “If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task”. Paul affirms that the saying is true. The task of overseeing is “noble”. And since it is noble or praiseworthy, those filling this position must meet similar standards. They, too, must be noble.

But before we look at the qualifications an overseer must meet, we must first discuss the term overseer itself. What is an overseer? We can find some answers in Paul’s letter to Titus.

... appoint elders in every town as I directed you – if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. Titus 1:5-7

Notice, Paul uses two different terms to describe the same person here. In verse five, he tells Titus to appoint elders. In verse seven, he calls this same person an overseer. Clearly, then, an overseer is also called an elder.

This same truth may be seen in Acts 20:17-28. We’ll focus particularly on verses 17 and 28.

Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. Acts 20:17

“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God ...” Acts 20:28

Again, we see that an overseer is also called an elder. The terms are synonymous.

It is worth examining the Greek word which is translated as “overseer”, for the word itself provides a great picture of what an overseer is called to do.

The word *episcopos* is made up of *epi*, “upon” or “over,” and *scopos*, “watcher.” So it literally means “one who watches over.” Thayer defines it thus: “*An overseer*, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, *any curator, guardian, or superintendent ... specifically, the superintendent, head or overseer of any Christian church*” (p. 243).¹

¹ Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), p. 389.

The King James Version of the Bible, at least in this passage, translates the word *episkopos* as “bishop”. An overseer, then, may also be called a bishop. Unfortunately, for modern readers, this word choice – bishop – probably obscures rather than clarifies the true meaning of the word *episkopos*. The bishop’s area of influence was, in the New Testament, considered to be a church. He was not “the bishop” of the church. He was one of several bishops. The bishop’s area of influence is now considered to be an entire diocese – a jurisdiction of many, many churches. And there are not many bishops within each diocese. It would, undoubtedly, confuse the first “bishops” if they were to hear of the vast territory under a modern bishop’s oversight.

Turning to the NT, we discover one fact immediately: there is no mention of any diocesan bishop. In the one church at Philippi there were *episcopoi*... “bishops” (Phil. 1:1). The bishop was a local official, and there were several of these in each congregation.²

The Greek word translated “elder” is *presbuteros*, which is also sometimes translated into English as “presbyter.” As with the term bishop, the term presbyter, as used today, may be somewhat different from the term as used in the first century. But, technically speaking, a presbyter is an elder, otherwise known as an overseer.

What does an elder/overseer do? Two significant clues may be found in the verses we have just considered. In Titus 1:7, Paul calls the elder, “God’s steward”. And in Acts 20:28, Paul tells the elders to “care for the church of God”. The elder, therefore, is one who cares for the church as a steward. God has given him the responsibility for the condition of the church. As a steward, he must oversee the church, all the while recognizing that he is not caring for his own possession. It is God’s. And to God he must give account for his stewardship.

Peter expands on the elder’s responsibilities in 1 Peter 5. Read this passage carefully, for here Peter reveals more truths about who an elder is and what he is to do.

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. 1 Peter 5:1-5

In verse two, Peter tells the elders to “shepherd the flock of God that is among you”. In verse four, he calls Jesus the “chief Shepherd”. An elder, then, is a shepherd. Under Jesus, the chief Shepherd, he is to take care of the flock of God. In verse two, we see that the elder is to exercise oversight. And he is to do this eagerly. In verse three, we see that the elder is to be an example to the flock. In verse five, we read that those who are younger are to be subject to the elders – the implication being that the elders are older than others in the assembly, and that they are, in some sense, telling the younger believers what to do. And in verse five, we read that the elders must clothe themselves “with humility” toward one another. Obviously, this includes those under their care.

There were also, as I’m sure you noticed, several admonitions to the elders that they must not do certain things. They must not do their work under compulsion. They must not do their work for “shameful gain”. And they must not be “domineering”.

The elder has been entrusted with the church of God. They, like Jesus, are to function as shepherds. A shepherd’s responsibility is to provide an ideal atmosphere for the sheep – an environment where they can grow and where they are free from danger. That is an elder’s responsibility.

² Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), p. 389.

WEEK FOUR

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

Paul's final instructions to the elders in Ephesus confirm this.

“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears.”

Acts 20:28-31

According to Paul, an elder must “Pay careful attention” to himself and “to all the flock”. He must keep an eye on his own life and on the lives of those the Lord has put under his care. Paul then speaks of “fierce wolves” coming in and men rising from within. These men would seek to “draw away the disciples”. Because of this, the elders must be alert, looking for any dangers that would come after the flock.

Paying careful attention to the flock obviously includes preaching and teaching the word. And this is one of the elder's primary responsibilities.

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. 1 Timothy 5:17

Given the elders' responsibility within the church, it is easy to see why those serving as elders must meet the very highest standards. It is, indeed, a “noble” task, demanding strength of character, wisdom, boldness, alertness, humility, an intimate acquaintance with the chief Shepherd, and, as the elder is to lead the flock of God into truth, a deep knowledge of God's word.

Who, possibly, is fit for such a task? Certainly not just anyone. As the elder has been given great authority, the possibility of great damage being done by an elder is also very real. This is why the standard for those who would serve as elders is so very high.

So what are the standards for an elder?

Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. 1 Timothy 3:2-7

These are God's expectations for those who would serve as elders. You'll find 14 different attributes listed here.³ All of them are important.

1. ABOVE REPROACH – The idea here is that there is nothing about the person and his actions that may be called into question. There are no questionable traits he may have.

2. THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE – This is the most difficult of the attributes to define, for Paul does not explain exactly what he means by the phrase “the husband of one wife”. Does this phrase mean that an elder cannot, under any circumstances, have been married a second time? Does it mean a divorced man cannot serve as an elder? Does it mean that only married men may serve as elders? Or does it simply mean that an elder cannot have more than one wife at one time? The commentaries differ widely on this. However, I am inclined to believe Paul is referring to polygamy here. Wayne Grudem, in his book *Systematic Theology*, outlines four reasons why this – the prohibition of polygamy – appears to be Paul's intended meaning:

(1) All the other qualifications listed by Paul refer to a man's present status, not to his entire past life. For example, 1 Timothy 3:1-7 does not mean “one who has never been violent,” but “one who is not now violent, but gentle.” It does not mean “one who has never been a lover of money,”

³ You'll find a similar list of qualifications in Titus 1:5-9.

but “one who is not now a lover of money.” It does not mean “one who has been above reproach for his whole life,” but “one who is now above reproach.” If we made these qualifications apply to one’s entire past life, then we would exclude from office almost everyone who became a Christian as an adult, for it is doubtful that any non-Christian could meet these qualifications.

(2) Paul could have said “having been married only once” if he had wanted to, but he did not. (3) We should not prevent remarried widowers from being elders, but that would be necessary if we take the phrase to mean “having been married only once.” The qualifications for elders are all based on a man’s moral and spiritual character, and there is nothing in Scripture to suggest that a man who remarried after his wife had died has lower moral or spiritual qualifications. (4) Polygamy was possible in the first century. Although it was not common, polygamy was practiced, especially among the Jews. The Jewish historian Josephus says, “For it is an ancestral custom of ours to have several wives at the same time.” Rabbinic legislation also regulated inheritance customs and other aspects of polygamy.

3. SOBER-MINDED – This does not mean the elder cannot have a jovial personality or ever tell a joke. It means the elder must take the church and the work of the Lord seriously. Serving as an elder is not to be taken lightly. It is a noble task. The elder must feel the awful “weight” of this position – he has been entrusted with God’s church. If he does not feel the weight of the task, he is not fit for the task.

4. SELF-CONTROLLED – Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. It is to be a characteristic of all Christians. The elder, especially, must exhibit this trait. He must not “lose it” on a regular basis. An elder must be able to keep his tongue, body and emotions in check. An elder must be especially self-controlled in the area of the tongue. He will hear things that ought not to be repeated. He will know things that ought not to be shared. A loose-tongued elder, a man who lacks self-control in this area, can ruin individuals and bring great damage to the church.

5. RESPECTABLE – This means the elder must be the kind of person others look up to. If others do not respect the person, in all areas of life, he is not fit to serve as an elder. How can one who is not respected be expected to teach and lead others? It is impossible to receive from one you do not respect.

6. HOSPITABLE – The elder must be a person who opens his life and home to others. If selfishness is a characteristic of his, he is obviously not fit to serve in the household of God, for serving in God’s house involves loving and working with people – many people.

7. ABLE TO TEACH – The elder must be able to teach God’s word. It is obvious that if he must be able to teach God’s word, he must know God’s word. And he must not hold any strange beliefs. He must hold to sound doctrine. Paul makes this clear in Titus 1:9.

He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. Titus 1:9

As a teacher in the church, he must have the ability and the willingness to rebuke those who would attempt to confuse the saints with contradictory doctrines. Obviously this means the elder must be a man of courage and not a people-pleaser.

8. NOT A DRUNKARD – Drinking alcohol is not prohibited for the elder. Drunkenness is. And drunkenness disqualifies a man from serving as an elder. Obviously this would include other addictions. A man who is not self-controlled in all areas of life is not eligible to serve as an elder.

9. NOT VIOLENT BUT GENTLE – The elder must be Christ-like in all areas. He must walk in gentleness, even toward those who oppose him. An elder must have the gentle strength to turn the other cheek. This is not weakness. It is proof of Christ’s strength working through the elder. A man’s character in this area will be tested many times during his eldership. If he is a violent man, he will not be able to serve without bringing reproach on the name of Christ.

WEEK FOUR

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

10. NOT QUARRELSOME – The elder must not delight in arguments. This is not to say that he won't have many opportunities to enter into them. He will. But he is encouraged to answer those who oppose him gently. Obviously, this is a person who has, as we have seen in many of these qualifications, self-control.

11. NOT A LOVER OF MONEY – The elder must have a proper relationship with money. If he does not, he may be tempted to use his position to his own financial benefit. Unfortunately, many believe that “godliness is a means of gain” (1 Timothy 6:5). Those who believe this way, if brought into positions of leadership, bring untold damage to the church, for “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils” (1 Timothy 6:10).

12. HE MUST MANAGE HIS HOUSEHOLD WITH ALL DIGNITY – The elder's household must be in order. His children must be submissive to him. If they are not, how can the elder expect to work with the far greater numbers of people within the church? The home is, in some ways, a miniature version of the church. Anything the man is within his home, he will also be within the church. If he is a poor manager within the home, he will be a poor manager in the church. Of course, we must not limit the meaning of “He must manage his own household” to simply raising children. Management goes beyond the children. For instance, a man's ability to handle finances within the church may be tested by his ability to handle finances at home. Are his finances in order? If they are not, the man is not eligible to serve as an elder.

13. HE MUST NOT BE A RECENT CONVERT – The elder must have known the Lord for some time. In fact, this idea is embedded in the meaning of the word elder itself – it means an older person. No recent convert – no matter how gifted and talented – is eligible to serve as an elder. A great deal of maturing must happen before he is fit for the task. If he is elevated to this position too soon, “he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil”. Humility in an elder is essential. Therefore, the elder must not be a recent convert.

14. HE MUST BE WELL THOUGHT OF BY OUTSIDERS – At first glance, this may be a surprising qualification, for it concerns the opinions of those outside the church. Before placing a man in this position, the church must consider how the unsaved think of the person. If he has a bad reputation among the unsaved, he is not eligible to serve as an elder, for the man would bring reproach upon the church.

What man is possibly fit for such a task? Obviously, not every man. Many may aspire to be an elder, but only a few are fit for the task. Far too often, however, people are appointed to positions such as this with very little forethought or prayer. Positions are filled within the church based on a person's desire or willingness, rather than qualifications. What happens when the church selects people for this position who are not qualified? It is disastrous, resulting in sick, wounded and missing sheep. Better, by far, to exercise restraint in appointing men to positions of authority, than appointing men too quickly and realizing the mistake after the damage has begun. This is why Paul tells Timothy, “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands ...” (1 Timothy 5:22).

Don't take the requirements listed here lightly. Wherever they are ignored, a price of some kind will be paid. But wherever they are heeded, health and life in the church are sure to follow.

DAY SIX (CONTINUED)

This week, the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

Week Five

1 TIMOTHY 3:8-16

WEEK FIVE

1 TIMOTHY 3:8-16

DAY ONE

Read 1 Timothy 3:8-16 through twice. The first time through the verses, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the verses at this time. The second time through the verses, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the verses leave you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

1 TIMOTHY 3:8-16

⁸ Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. ⁹ They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. ¹¹ Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. ¹³ For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

¹⁴ I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, ¹⁵ if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth. ¹⁶ Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

*He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.*

DAY TWO

Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13

1. In 1 Timothy 3:8-13 Paul outlines requirements to be met by those desiring to become deacons. Before we consider these requirements, let's consider the position of deacon itself. Do you find any hints about a deacon's actual job description in these verses?

2. How do you know that deacons and elders are not synonymous terms? In other words, how do you know they are not fulfilling the same ministry within the church? 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Philippians 1:1

3. Based on what you know of elders, what role would you expect the deacons are *not* filling? See also Timothy 5:17

4. Acts 6:1-6 recounts the establishment of seven men into ministry. Their ministry was a precursor of the role deacons fill within the church. What situation led to the appointment of these seven men to this position?

5. How did the apostles differentiate between the task they needed to accomplish and the task these seven men were to accomplish? What does this tell you about the task deacons are to accomplish?

6. How large was the church these men were to serve? What might this say about the job these seven men needed to do? *Acts 4:4*

7. What standard were these seven men to meet?

DAY THREE

Read *1 Timothy 3:8-13*

8. Acts 6 described a practical need within the church in Jerusalem. What practical needs might a deacon meet in the church today?

9. According to 1 Timothy 3:8-13, what are the requirements one who would serve as a deacon must meet?

WEEK FIVE

1 TIMOTHY 3:8-16

10. In verse ten, Paul says that the deacons must “be tested first”. What sort of test do you think Paul is referring to here?

11. How might this test be administered?

12. Does your church test those who would serve in this position? If so, how?

13. Why do you think the spiritual condition of the potential deacon’s wife is mentioned in verse 11? Why should her spiritual maturity or lack thereof affect his ability to serve in this position?

14. Does your church consider the wives of those who would serve in this position?

15. What are the practical benefits the deacons bring to the elders within the church? See Acts 6:2-4

16. What are the practical benefits the deacons bring to themselves? 1 Timothy 3:13

DAY FOUR

Read 1 Timothy 3:14-15

17. Why was Paul writing these detailed instructions to Timothy? 1 Timothy 3:14-15

18. In verse 15, Paul describes the church as “the household of God”, “the church of the living God”, and “a pillar and buttress of truth”. What is the significance of each of these?

“the household of God” –

“the church of the living God” –

“a pillar and buttress of truth” –

DAY FIVE

Read *1 Timothy 3:16*

22. In verse 16, Paul quotes what appears to be an ancient hymn or creed. What value would quoting a hymn or creed be to the people in the church?

23. In verse 15, Paul called the church “a pillar and buttress of truth”. The ancient hymn or creed in verse 16 – appears to be the truth of which the church is a pillar and buttress. What is this truth? Be as specific as possible.

24. What does this say about the importance of the church in the world today?

25. What do you think happens to the church’s role as a pillar and buttress of truth if we ignore Paul’s instructions in these chapters?

WEEK FIVE

1 TIMOTHY 3:8-16

WEEK FIVE

1 TIMOTHY 3:8-16

DAY SIX

Read the study notes for chapter three verses eight through 16.

1 TIMOTHY 3:8-16

Last week, we considered the standard a man must meet in order to serve as an elder. In 1 Timothy 3:8-13, Paul outlines the standard a man must meet in order to serve as a deacon. Before we look at the standards themselves, let us consider the position of deacon itself. What is it?

It may appear obvious, but it is helpful in finding our answer to recognize that a deacon is not an elder. The terms are not synonymous. This is clear from 1 Timothy 3, where Paul provides qualifications for both roles, and from Paul's introductory remarks to the Philippians.

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

*To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons...
Philippians 1:1*

Since the deacon is not an elder, it would seem clear that the distinct role a deacon fills is not the role an elder fills (shepherding). But a job description for deacons is not found in either of these passages. So, again, the question bears repeating. What is a deacon?

The word "deacon" provides some hints about what this person does. The Greek noun *diakonos*, means "servant, minister."¹ The word is used in a variety of ways in the New Testament. It is used of the servants at the wedding where Jesus turned the water into wine.² It is used of the attendants in the parable of the wedding feast.³ It is used by Jesus in John 12:26 when he calls the one who follows him his servant.

"If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."

In secular Greek writings, the word was used in similar ways.

It described a waiter at table, a servant, a messenger, a steward, and was even used with reference to specific occupations, as baker or cook.⁴

The definitions center on serving. And this is the core thought wrapped into the title "deacon." Deacons are, in a sense, "official" servants of the church – servants particularly focused on the physical needs of the saints. And while all Christians are called to *serve* in this manner, deacons are called to *lead* in this service.

The first time this office may be seen is in Acts 6. As you read through the passage, you will notice that the men referred to here, later called "the seven",⁵ are not called by the title deacons. However, their task is certainly deacon-like.

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. Acts 6:1-6

1 William D. Mounce (General Editor), *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), p. 159.

2 See John 2:1-11.

3 See Matthew 22:13.

4 Charles F. Pfeiffer, Howard F. Vos, John Rea (Editors), *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1975), p. 430.

5 See Acts 21:8.

There are several significant facts to consider within this passage:

First, notice the problem that arose in the church, for this problem suggests, in great measure, the solution deacons provide to the church. The problem was that the physical needs of the Hellenistic widows were not being met. The appointing of seven men to this task was to ensure that all widows within the church would receive the “daily distribution” they needed. The daily distribution was a distribution of money or food to the believing widows because they had no other way to meet these needs. This was a very practical “physical” need within the church.

Second, notice how the apostles described the task these men were to perform.

*“It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.”
Acts 6:2*

The verb which is translated “to serve tables” is *diakonein* – a verb closely related to the noun *diakonos* (deacon), evidence that this passage is describing the ministry of a deacon, even though the particular title of deacon is not used in this passage.

The verb form (diakonein) means “to serve”; particularly, “to wait at table” (cf. Arndt, p. 183). It connotes a very personal service, closely related to a service of love⁶

The apostles were not suggesting that the seven men selected to this position would be spending all their time personally serving meals to the saints. The church in Jerusalem was, by this time, far too large to be personally served by seven men.

But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand. Acts 4:4

If there were 5,000 men at this time, there were, presumably, at least 5,000 women, as well and thousands upon thousands of children. This was an enormous group of people the seven men were to serve. Obviously, they would need the help of many within the church if they were to accomplish this task. A good deal of the serving these men did would have to have included the management of this great task. Planning and delegating were certainly a large part of their work. That is why these men needed to be full of wisdom. The task the apostles were asking these men to oversee was enormous. These men were given the task of ensuring that very personal, loving, and practical care was extended to all people within the church.

Third, notice that the loving care these men were to extend was distinguished from preaching.

*“It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.”
Acts 6:2*

It was also distinguished from teaching and from prayer.

“But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” Acts 6:4

The deacons, again, were called “to serve tables”. It is important to understand that the apostles were not saying that serving tables is unimportant. Rather, they were saying that they were not the ones to serve in this way. If they were to serve the people in a deacon-like manner, they would need to “give up preaching the word of God”. But by giving this task to other men, the apostles were enabled to devote themselves “to prayer and to the ministry of the word”.

Fourth, notice the very high standard these men were to meet.

“Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.” Acts 6:3

⁶ Charles F. Pfeiffer, Howard F. Vos, John Rea (Editors), *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1975), p. 430.

WEEK FIVE

1 TIMOTHY 3:8-16

The men filling this role were not spiritual novices in any sense. They were godly men with a good reputation, overflowing with the presence of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. These were mature Christians in every sense of the word.

THE STANDARD FOR DEACONS

In 1 Timothy 3, Paul provides even more specific guidelines concerning those who would serve as deacons.

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 3:8-13

As with those who would serve as elders, it is evident that not many men will meet this standard. Paul has effectively narrowed the field of eligible candidates to only the most mature believers.

It is interesting that Paul says that one who would serve as a deacon must “be tested first”. Obviously, this means that even if someone appears to meet the qualifications, they must first be put to a test. We should not appoint someone before they prove their worth. What sort of test is Paul thinking of here? He doesn’t say, but since he is discussing deacons here, it is probably the sort of test that would truly test a deacon’s ability to successfully serve the practical needs of the saints. For instance, a potential deacon may be tested by putting him in charge of visitation at the nursing home for a time. Obviously, this is not the sort of test a person could “pass” in one day. Paul is probably thinking about the sort of test that would require a certain length of time to pass. During this time, faithfulness would be seen (or not seen). Submission to the elders and deacons within the church would be seen (or not seen). The ability to graciously serve would be seen (or not seen).

The standard for passing this test is clear. Paul says, “let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless”. We are not to let the above-average serve in this role. We are not to let the gifted, but morally deficient, serve in this role. We are not to let the willing, but otherwise spiritually unfit, serve in this role. We are to let those who “prove themselves blameless” fill this role.

Just think how many problems testing would eliminate. Rather than putting people in positions before they are ready, we would see their readiness on display. Obviously, the testing of potential deacons demands forethought. For it means deacons cannot be appointed in a day. Time must be taken to ensure the right people are given the position of deacon. It is an honored position, filled by notable heroes of the faith like the first martyr Stephen, and it is not to be given to the untested and unqualified.

It may surprise some to see the deacon’s wife mentioned in the list of qualifications.

Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. 1 Timothy 3:11

This is an indication of how demanding the standards actually are. Not only must the man be qualified, his wife, too, must be qualified. If she is not, the man is not to serve as a deacon. She will greatly hinder his effectiveness (if not totally negate it) if she is not “dignified”, “soberminded”, and “faithful in all things”.

It is tempting, when in the position of appointing deacons, to overlook some of what is said here. But a price will always be paid when we ignore these standards. It is harder to undo a hasty, but wrong, appointment, than to slowly and carefully develop, test and, finally, appoint deacons.

It is tempting to think that the deacon does not receive anything for his work. All he does is serve, serve, serve in practical, often-unnoticed ways. Quite the opposite is true.

For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 3:13

By serving in this way, the deacon doesn't lose, he gains. He gains a good standing with God and with man. And he gains "great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus". This is not a position to be avoided. It is one to line up for!

What an important task deacons are called to fill! Not only do they meet the practical needs of the church, they also take burdens off the shoulders of those who need to focus on preaching, teaching and praying. Can you see why the church needs both deacons and elders? If either one is lacking, the church will not function as she should. If there are no deacons, practical needs in the church will either go unmet (as was the case in Acts 6:1, when certain widows were being "neglected in the daily distribution"), or they will be met by those who should be preaching, teaching and praying. When deacons and elders are working together, each looking after their appropriate areas of concern, the church thrives.

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR TIMOTHY, WARNING FOR THE CHURCH

At this point, Paul inserts a few personal words to Timothy.

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth. 1 Timothy 3:14-15

The fact that these words are for Timothy alone is clear from Paul's use of the singular "you" in verses 14 and 15. Again, however, Paul is fully aware that the entire church in Ephesus will hear the entire contents of this letter read to them. This is a warning to them that they had better pay careful attention to the instructions Paul has just given to Timothy, for Paul himself may arrive in Ephesus in the not-too-distant future.

As we discussed in the introduction, Paul was probably in Macedonia at this time. He planned to travel to Ephesus in the near future, and it was clearly his hope that steps would be taken, before he arrived, to set the church in order.

A proper understanding of this letter is not possible if verse 15 is missed. Paul wrote these words so that Timothy (and all the church in Ephesus) might know "how one ought to behave in the household of God". Paul's choice of wording here makes it clear that his instructions up to this point are not suggestions. They are expected behaviors.

In this verse, Paul calls the church by three different names: "the household of God", "the church of the living God", and "a pillar and buttress of truth". All three of these descriptors are worth considering.

"The household of God" – We cannot behave as we would like in the church, for we are not the head of it. It is God's household. And, as with the parents in a house, it is his to order as he chooses. Who are we to dictate to God the principles with which he runs his own household?

"The church of the living God" – God is not dead. He is very much alive. And he cares, more deeply than we know, what happens within his church. His eyes roam the earth, at this very moment, looking to give "strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him" (2 Chronicles 16:9).

WEEK FIVE

1 TIMOTHY 3:8-16

When a church is concerned only with its history, or becomes the slave of a static interpretation of doctrine, or is tempted to become a mildly religious club of congenial people, it needs to be recalled to the worship of the living God, who is present and active in his world, who has more truth yet to break forth from his Word, and who is summoning his church to partnership in a great task for which he inspires and enables his people.⁷

"A pillar and buttress of truth" – The word translated buttress here means, "that which provides a firm base for something".⁸ What is it that the church provides a firm base for? It is the truth! What a calling the church has. We are the supporters of truth in this world. If we don't care for the truth of the gospel in this world, who will, for it is ours to care for? Since the church has been given this great responsibility, it – the church – demands our care and protection. That is why we ought to care about proper behavior in the church. The church matters. It is not an institution of equal standing with the Lions Club, Rotary Club or Boy Scouts. Those groups, as fine as they might be, are not the buttresses of truth. The church is. Jude puts it this way.

...I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. Jude 3

The faith was delivered to the saints – that's the church. And if we're to contend for the faith, we must make sure the church stays strong. That's why it is so important that we learn "how one ought to behave in the household of God".

THE TRUTH THE CHURCH IS TO UPHOLD

As he did in 1 Timothy 3:1, Paul now writes something which would have been known by the church at large. In 3:1, Paul repeated a saying. In verse 16 Paul appears to be quoting a hymn or creed which was known to the church in Ephesus. The opening phrase, "Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness", is not part of the hymn (or creed). It is an introduction to the actual words of the hymn. The hymn is as follows.

*He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory. 1 Timothy 3:16*

Why did Paul place this hymn here? He did it, I believe, because the hymn presents, in clear language which the church at that time would be very familiar with, the truth of which the church is the pillar and buttress. The truth centers on Jesus.

Two words Paul uses to introduce this hymn are worth considering. First, he uses the word "mystery". This word means, "a matter to the knowledge of which initiation is necessary; a secret which would remain such but for revelation".⁹ Thus, Paul is not talking about something that is a mystery to everyone. He is talking about something that is a mystery to all but the Christian – one to whom the secret has been revealed. Second, the word translated "godliness" can also be translated "religion" or "the Christian religion".¹⁰ Thus, what Paul is saying is that the truth of the Christian religion is a great mystery to the world, but the secret has been revealed to the church. This mystery is focused on the person of the Lord Jesus. Jesus himself is the secret of the Christian religion. He is the secret of godliness.

The "mystery of godliness" is "the revealed secret of true religion, the mystery of Christianity, the Person of Christ" (Lock, p. 44). It is particularly the incarnate Christ who is revealed here in the striking credal statement that follows.¹¹

Thus, the following hymn is the mystery of the Christian religion. This is the truth the church is to uphold – the truth of which the church is a buttress.

7 Morgan P. Noyes, *The Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, Volume II – The First and Second Epistles to Timothy and The Epistle to Titus* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1955), p. 420.

8 Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, F.W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature – Third Edition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 276.

9 William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), p. 226.

10 William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), p. 226.

11 Ralph Earle, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 11:1,2 Timothy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), p. 370.

*He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory. 1 Timothy 3:16*

In six short phrases, Paul outlines the mystery of the Christian religion. Again, note that the entire mystery centers on the person of the Lord Jesus.

“He was manifested in the flesh” – the fact that Jesus came in the flesh is central to our faith. John, in his gospel and his epistles,¹² returns to this truth again and again.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

If Jesus did not come in the flesh, he could not serve as our high priest and he could not be our Savior.

He was “vindicated by the Spirit” – This probably means that the Holy Spirit proved that Jesus is who he said he is. The Spirit’s actions showed him to be true. They validated Jesus’ words.

“But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” Matthew 12:28

He was “seen by angels” – From Jesus’ birth to his death, angels were part of his life. They, like the Holy Spirit, testified to who Jesus is.

And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God.” Luke 1:35

He was “proclaimed among the nations” – Jesus was proclaimed among the nations as the Messiah; the one whom God had placed all his favor upon. Men were urged to place their faith in God’s only Son.

He was “believed on in the world” – When the nations heard this message, many believed, and, consequently, received eternal life. This is the one message the world needs; the one message it longs for.

He was “taken up in glory” – Where would we be if there were no resurrection? Without it, Christ’s death would be meaningless. He would not be our high priest. But he is alive! He is currently seated at the right hand of God, interceding for those who love him.

Christ is the mystery of the Christian faith. I’m glad I know this mystery. But it is not enough for me to know this truth. The church needs to know it and to be ordered in such a way that it can function as the pillar and buttress of this truth. We need to take the ordering of God’s household seriously. For when it is in order, the truth is displayed in all its glory for all the world to see.

DAY SIX (CONTINUED)

This week, the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

12 See 1 John 1:1-3.

Week Six

1 TIMOTHY 4

DAY ONE

Read 1 Timothy 4 through twice. The first time through the chapter, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the chapter at this time. The second time through the chapter, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the verses leave you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

1 TIMOTHY 4

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ² through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, ³ who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴ For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵ for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

⁶ If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. ⁷ Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸ for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. ⁹ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. ¹⁰ For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

¹¹ Command and teach these things. ¹² Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. ¹³ Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. ¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. ¹⁵ Practice these things, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. ¹⁶ Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

DAY TWO

Read 1 Timothy 4:1-5

1. 1 Timothy 4:1-4 seems to be an abrupt topic change from 3:14-16. How do you think these two sections are related?

2. In 1 Timothy 4:1-4 Paul provides Timothy with specific information about conditions in “later times”. What does he tell him will happen, and what benefit would knowing this be to Timothy?

WEEK SIX

1 TIMOTHY 4

3. How, specifically, do you think the Spirit was saying this?

4. What did Jesus say about this topic? *Matthew 24:3-14*

5. What else did Paul teach about this topic? *Acts 20:29-31; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 2 Timothy 4:3-4*

6. What, if anything, should this warning have to do with how we teach and lead within the church today?

7. Who is behind this departing from the faith (look carefully, for there is more than one party involved)? *1 Timothy 4:1-2*

8. What does this tell you about Satan and his schemes? *See also Ephesians 6:12*

9. How does Paul describe the human false teachers in 1 Timothy 4:2?

10. What does Paul mean by these descriptions?

11. What specific false teachings does Paul discuss in 1 Timothy 4:2-3?

12. How does Paul refute the false teachings in verses three through five?

DAY THREE

Read *1 Timothy 4:6-10*

13. What was Timothy to do with the information Paul was giving him? *1 Timothy 4:6*

14. How do you think Timothy did this? *See also 1 Timothy 4:11*

15. In verse seven, Paul gives Timothy two specific commands. What are they?

16. Bodily training is compared to training yourself for godliness. How are these two things similar? How are these two things different?

17. What does this tell you about the time it takes to become a godly person?

WEEK SIX

1 TIMOTHY 4

18. What benefit does godliness bring to a person?

19. In verse ten, Paul says “to this end we toil and strive”. That verse, however, does not say what the end is. What is the end he is toiling and striving to achieve? See *1 Timothy 4:8*

20. Are you toiling and striving to see this in your own life? How are you doing this?

21. Paul calls God “the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe”. We do not often speak of God as the Savior of the unsaved. How is he the Savior of those who do not believe?

22. How is he “especially” the Savior of those who believe?

DAY FOUR

Read *1 Timothy 4:11-12*

23. In verse 11, Paul tells Timothy to “Command and teach these things.” What is the difference between commanding and teaching? What do Paul’s instructions to Timothy tell you about Paul’s understanding of a leader’s relationship with the rest of the church? Do you think leaders typically have this level of authority within the church today?

24. In verse 12, Timothy is given two different instructions. What are they? How do you think it would be possible for Timothy to accomplish the first instruction? What, specifically, could he do to ensure that this was accomplished? How are the two instructions connected?

25. Timothy was to set the believers an example in five different areas. What is Paul expecting to happen as Timothy does this?

26. What does this tell you about the importance of godly leadership in the church?

27. What if these instructions were written to you and Paul expected you to model the behavior for the church to imitate? Would you like the results that would follow from imitating your behavior? What specific changes might you need to make in each of these areas?

“in speech” –

“in conduct” –

“in love” –

“in faith” –

“in purity” –

DAY FIVE

Read *1 Timothy 4:13-16*

28. In verse 13, Timothy is told to devote himself to three things. What are they? What would you expect each of these things to accomplish?

WEEK SIX

1 TIMOTHY 4

29. What might verse 14 tell us about Timothy? *See also 2 Timothy 1:6-7*

30. What might this verse tell us about spiritual gifts in the life of a believer?

31. Have you neglected any gifts God has given you?

32. Paul seems more focused on Timothy's spiritual growth than on the rest of the believers' spiritual growth. Why is this? *1 Timothy 4:15-16*

33. Timothy was encouraged to keep a close eye on two things. What are they?

34. For what, specifically, would he be watching?

35. Why would Paul tell Timothy that if he obeyed him in these things he would "save" both himself and his hearers? We know only Jesus saves us. In what sense is he using the word "save" in connection with Timothy here?

36. Based on the verses you've studied this week, what changes do you believe the Lord would have you make in your own life?

DAY SIX

Read the study notes for chapter four.

1 TIMOTHY 4

Paul's last words in chapter three were of the glorious "truths" of Christ – the "truth" of which the church is a pillar and buttress. His first words in chapter four are of a very different nature.

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons ... 1 Timothy 4:1

Departures from the faith have happened at many times and in many places, but this refers to a specific time, called "later times" here, when there would be a departure by "some" from the faith. The very fact that Paul brings this out in this chapter indicates that this will be no small event within the church. Notice that Paul does not say that this is his prediction for the future. He says that the Spirit is saying this. Don't you love how real the Holy Spirit was to Paul? He is real, obviously, but we often treat him as if he no longer is speaking. Paul does not do this. The words he uses here, "the Spirit expressly says", are in the present tense, meaning that this was not something that Paul heard the Spirit say once in the past, but, rather, that the Spirit was speaking of this continuously. By saying that the Spirit "expressly" says this, Paul was telling Timothy that the Spirit's words on this issue were quite specific. Paul had not missed the Spirit's meaning.

Who are those who will fall away – the people referred to generically as "some" in verse one? These people are not the false teachers Paul wrote about in chapter one – the ones he told Timothy to charge "not to teach any different doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:3). The "some" people Paul writes about in chapter four are not the deceivers. They are the deceived. They hear the false teaching, they choose to consume it, and, in consequence, they depart from the faith.

Paul says that this will happen in "later times". When are the later times? Paul does not say, but from his choice of words it is obvious that they were, at the time he wrote this, still future. He was already seeing people depart from the faith in his day, but this warning was of an even greater exodus in days to come. Jesus also spoke of a great exodus from the faith when his disciples asked him about the "close of the age".

And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. Matthew 24:10-11

Notice the words "many" here. Jesus was quite clear that this is not some insignificant issue we are discussing here. Its impact will be far reaching. This is not a problem which we have grown beyond. What they experienced in small measure, those in "later times" will experience in greater measure.

What causes these people to "depart from the faith"?

... some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons ... 1 Timothy 4:1

Paul's answer here would surprise most of the world; indeed, they would call it foolish, for they do not believe in the spirit realm. But it should not surprise the redeemed. We have been told, quite clearly, that our battle is against "the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). Why would it surprise us that demons are behind pulling people from the faith?

Demons are not first century fairy tales – the biblical equivalent to the big bad wolf. They absolutely do exist, and they are actively fighting against you and all you hold dear. They would love to see you follow their teaching, not the Master's. Obviously, they cannot hope to deceive those

WEEK SIX

1 TIMOTHY 4

1 Paul's feelings regarding false teachers were beyond merely strong. He felt absolutely no mercy for them. Just listen to his words regarding false teachers in Galatians 1:9, "If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed". In other words, let him go to hell.

WEEK SIX

1 TIMOTHY 4

who know the truth with a full frontal attack. If a teaching is seen as demonic from the start, it will not be accepted. So how do demons teach their foul doctrines? How do they convince “some” to depart from the faith? They do it through human vessels.

... through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared ... 1 Timothy 4:2

Demons work through liars with seared consciences. The imagery here is of someone whose conscience has been grossly misshapen by fire. It is scorched by evil, toughening its once-tender constitution. Now, the conscience has no feeling. It is tattooed by sin.

They are, as Paul says elsewhere, “detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work” (Titus 1:16), and “warped and sinful” and “self-condemned” (Titus 3:11).

These are not innocent people.¹ They are puppets, mouthing lies that have been taught to them by demons. But the advantage these people bring to the demons – the reason the demons need their assistance – is that they do not look or sound like demons. These people have an appearance of innocence.

*... even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.
2 Corinthians 11:14-15*

Early in this letter, Paul referred to “love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5). What a contrast this is to the false teachers! The saints have good consciences – purified consciences.² The false teachers bear the grotesque branding of evil within their consciences. They promise life and joy and freedom, but they have none of these things.

Typically, false teachers like this, motivated by the demons who hate the saints and the liberty Jesus brings, will call into question the finished salvation of the saints and, step-by-step, begin taking freedom from the saints. They will pass rules and regulations attempting to box in the saints.

... who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. 1 Timothy 4:3-5

Why would the false teachers forbid marriage? Why would they require abstinence from certain foods? The seduction of these rules is the reward that is promised for those keeping them. The reward is, according to the false teachers, holiness or acceptability in God sight. According to their demonic theology, holiness is something that can be earned and maintained by one’s behavior. It is not, according to their theology, something that was purchased by the finished work of Christ and which is received by faith alone.

Do you see how dangerous this teaching is? How greatly it dishonors God and the work of Jesus? How it cheapens holiness, making it a trinket which can be purchased by a few right behaviors (selected, of course, by the false teachers)? Can you see how this elevates the false teachers and their rules above Jesus and the clear word of the cross?

As saints, why would we give up good things God created? He made food and he created it “to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth”.

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. 1 Timothy 4:4

Who are the false teachers to tell the saints what they can and cannot eat? Are they God? Do they determine what is good and holy? Do their words overrule God’s? Everything God made is good. It is holy because he made it. And if I thank God for it, my prayers, also, set it apart as holy and good.

² See Hebrews 9:14.

Brothers and sisters, we are not under the old covenant. Why would we follow its rules and regulations? We are sons and daughters of the cross. We have been given freedom in Christ.

So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. Galatians 3:24

What benefit do the false teachers gain from telling lies and from pulling people away from the truth? Obviously, they do not gain true holiness. They do gain, however, perceived holiness. Their followers believe they are holy. And, not surprisingly, once they gain followers, they gain money for themselves from those they have pulled from the truth.

Listen to Paul's words concerning the false teachers' motives:

They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. Galatians 4:17

If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. 1 Timothy 6:3-5

"I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them." Acts 20:29-30

What should we do with a warning like this – a warning the Holy Spirit “expressly” gives? Should we talk about it in the church? Should we warn the saints about these marauding liars with seared consciences? We absolutely must, for according to Paul, it's what a good servant of Christ Jesus does.

If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. 1 Timothy 4:6

Good and faithful servants fight for the truth and they hold it before the church as the standard of godliness. They do not tolerate demonic doctrines.

Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. 1 Timothy 4:7

But our aggressiveness in fighting false teaching does not put us solely on the defensive. While we're fighting the false teaching (called silly here), we proactively move forward, training ourselves for godliness.

Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 1 Timothy 4:7-8

Paul compares training yourself for godliness with bodily training. As with bodily training, training yourself for godliness involves hard work and a disciplined lifestyle. It involves purposely doing certain things and purposely avoiding others. And as with bodily training, training yourself for godliness brings benefits. But unlike bodily training, which only benefits the person during this lifetime, the benefits of training for godliness transcend this age. Godliness has eternal value. This – godliness – is what Paul and Timothy were working for. It is what all true ministers of the gospel are working for.³

³ In verse nine, Paul identifies another saying as trustworthy. A trustworthy saying, again, was a saying which would have been known and used by the church. This is the third “trustworthy” saying he has repeated in this letter (see also 1:15 and 3:1). But what is the trustworthy saying? Is it the text found in verse eight – “while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come” – or is it the text found in verse ten – “For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe”? Commentators disagree on this point. In either case, both verses carry the same weight for us as believers, for they are both God-breathed, whether they were first century trustworthy sayings or not.

WEEK SIX

1 TIMOTHY 4

For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. 1 Timothy 4:10

Working for godliness is not fruitless labor, because, unlike the false teachers, our hope and expectation is set on the living God, who rewards all those who diligently seek him.⁴ But it is labor, nonetheless. It's not something that just appears in the life of a believer. It takes toiling and striving. We train ourselves for godliness.

In verses 11 through 16, Paul outlines the training program for Timothy. The training program Paul outlines for Timothy was designed to not only bring change to Timothy (he was to practice these things), it was also designed to bring change to those who would hear him – in other words, the church in Ephesus (his actions would “save” his hearers). It is a training program for leaders. But it is one intended to envelop the whole church in godliness.

Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

1 Timothy 4:11-12

Leaders, take some time studying Paul's words to Timothy. These are words that apply to you as well. Paul begins by telling Timothy to “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity”. How was Timothy to keep others from despising him? He was to set the example in all areas of life. A leader's life must have no gaping holes in it. He must give the believers something to imitate. Paul knew this well. He knew the churches were watching him, and he encouraged them to imitate his actions.

I urge you, then, be imitators of me. 1 Corinthians 4:16

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1

Timothy's youth was not to provide an excuse to the church in Ephesus. It certainly could have. If Timothy wasn't on his guard, they would judge him as too young to be of service to the church. The only way to dismantle this judgment on the part of the church was for Timothy's behavior to be so exemplary that no judgment against him could stand. His example in all areas would nullify any despising he might have received because of his age. His example would allow those within the church to see beyond his youth.

When the church was gathered, Timothy was to “devote” himself to the word.

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. 1 Timothy 4:13

Programs do not bring change to God's people. God's word brings change. As leaders, we must be devoted to the preaching and teaching of God's word. Of course, if we're to be devoted to the public proclamation of the word, we must first have devoted ourselves to it privately. Private devotion to God's word means we must read it, meditate on it, wrestle with it, and love it. Remember, the apostles' words in Acts 6?

“But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” Acts 6:4

How can leaders devote themselves to the ministry of the word if they themselves are not devoted to it? Admittedly, devoting yourself to the word is toil. It demands sacrifices. But, oh, the results!

Of course, the word isn't the only tool we've been given. God also has given us gifts. Timothy however, seems to have been reluctant to use the gifts he had been given.

Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. 1 Timothy 4:14

⁴ See Hebrews 11:6.

Week Seven

1 TIMOTHY 5

DAY ONE

Read 1 Timothy 5 through twice. The first time through the chapter, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the chapter at this time. The second time through the chapter, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the verses leave you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

1 TIMOTHY 1

Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father. Treat younger men like brothers,² older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity.

³*Honor widows who are truly widows.* ⁴*But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.* ⁵*She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day,* ⁶*but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives.* ⁷*Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach.* ⁸*But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

⁹*Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband,* ¹⁰*and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work.* ¹¹*But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry* ¹²*and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith.* ¹³*Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not.* ¹⁴*So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander.* ¹⁵*For some have already strayed after Satan.* ¹⁶*If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are really widows.*

¹⁷*Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.* ¹⁸*For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."* ¹⁹*Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.* ²⁰*As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.* ²¹*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.* ²²*Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.* ²³*(No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.)* ²⁴*The sins of some men are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later.* ²⁵*So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.*

WEEK SEVEN

1 TIMOTHY 5

WEEK SEVEN

1 TIMOTHY 5

DAY TWO

Read *1 Timothy 5:1-2*

1. How is Timothy to treat those within the church?

Older men –

Younger men –

Older women –

Younger women –

2. Based on what you know of Timothy so far, do you think he struggled to keep Paul's instructions here? See also *Philippians 2:19-24*

3. Do you treat others as Paul recommends in these verses? What might change in your relationships if you did?

4. What problems would following Paul's recommendations protect against or eliminate?

DAY THREE

Read *1 Timothy 5:3-16*

5. Paul uses 14 verses to discuss widows in the church. Why would this topic demand so many verses?

6. How, specifically, is the church to honor widows?

7. What qualifications must a widow meet in order to be honored in this way? *1 Timothy 5:9-10*

8. Do you think it would be hard for the church to hold fast to these qualifications? What would happen if the church ignored them and honored all widows equally?

9. When, according to these verses, was the church not to honor widows in this way?

1 Timothy 5:4-6 ,11-16

10. Based on what you have learned in 1 Timothy thus far, whose responsibility would it be to oversee the church's actions in this regard? *See also Acts 6:1-6*

11. What new insights does this matter of honoring widows give you in regard to the difficulty of the position this person is filling?

12. According to Paul, what responsibility do children and grandchildren have in regard to their parents and grandparents? *1 Timothy 5:4, 8*

13. What are the children demonstrating when they care for their parents and grandparents?

14. What benefit does it bring to the church when people care for their relatives? *1 Timothy 5:16*

15. Does your church care for widows in this way?

WEEK SEVEN

1 TIMOTHY 5

16. What practical benefits would caring for widows in this way bring to the entire church?

17. How would non-Christians react if the church cared for widows in this way?

18. We live in a different day and age from the age when this was written. Do you think the church has the same level of responsibility today as in the first century?

19. What other groups of people, if any, might you add to the list of those the church should care for?

DAY FOUR

Read *1 Timothy 5:17-18*

20. In verse 17, Paul turns his attention to elders. What seems to be Paul's concern in these verses?

21. Why do you think he would need to address this topic?

22. Based on his words in 1 Corinthians 9:3-12, what level of "honoring" do you think Paul received from the church in Corinth?

23. How does Paul prove that the church is to take care of its elders? What examples does he use? Where was he quoting from? *1 Timothy 5:18*

24. Let's take the ox example a step further. What would happen to an ox that wasn't allowed to eat as it treaded out the grain? Do you think the same thing happens to elders?

25. Practically speaking, which elders should be honored in this way? Are there any elders that may not need to be honored in this way? *1 Timothy 5:17*

26. Does your church honor its elders in this way? What would have to change to bring your level of honoring to “double” honor?

27. If a church doesn’t honor its elders in this way, what might that say about how the church values the work an elder is called to do? Do you think this would impact how the church receives the word of God and responds to the authority of his chosen leaders? *See also Matthew 10:40–42*

DAY FIVE

Read *1 Timothy 5:19-25*

28. What, specifically, is the church to do if someone brings an accusation against an elder?

1 Timothy 5:19

29. According to Deuteronomy 19:15-20, what was taking this step designed to prevent?

30. What do you think happens when churches don’t follow Paul’s words here?

31. What is the church to do if an elder does “persist in sin”? Do you think this is speaking of any and all sins? *1 Timothy 5:20*

WEEK SEVEN

1 TIMOTHY 5

32. What is this command's intended result?

33. What do you think happens when churches don't follow Paul's words here?

34. Paul tells Timothy that he is making this charge to him in front of a number of witnesses. Who are these witnesses? Do you think Paul could have used any stronger charge before Timothy?

35. What does this tell you about the importance Paul placed on Timothy keeping these commands?

36. How would you respond to a charge like that?

37. Why do you think he would need to resort to this level of accountability with Timothy?

38. What does he mean when he speaks of keeping "these rules without prejudging" and "doing nothing from partiality"?

39. In verse 22, Paul gives Timothy specific instructions about the "laying on of hands" – referring to the ordaining of leaders in the church. What are these instructions?

40. What can happen when these instructions are ignored? *1 Timothy 5:22*

41. Verse 23 does not seem to fit with the rest of the paragraph. Why do you think Paul made this comment here? What does it demonstrate about Paul's relationship with Timothy?

42. How are verses 24 and 25 connected with Paul's instructions in verse 22?

WEEK SEVEN

1 TIMOTHY 5

DAY SIX

Read the study notes for chapter five.

1 TIMOTHY 5

Chapter five may be divided into three segments. The first segment (verses one and two) concerns Timothy's relations with others in the church. The second segment (verses three through 16) concerns widows within the church. The third segment (verses 17 through 25) concerns elders.

CONCERNING TIMOTHY'S RELATIONS WITH OTHERS IN THE CHURCH

How should Timothy, a young man with a tremendous amount of authority, treat those within the church?

Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father. Treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity. 1 Timothy 5:1-2

Timothy was to treat those within the church as if they were his own family members. He was to consider the age of those he was dealing with, and treat them with the same respect he would give family members of the same age. For instance, he would not correct his own father in a disrespectful manner, but would lovingly encourage him, carefully thinking of just the right words to use – words that were appropriate for a father-son relationship.

Brother-to-brother relationships are different from father-son relationships. There is a freedom brothers have in talking with each other. They can treat each other in a more straightforward manner, but they are to never forget the bond they have as brothers. Through thick and thin, they stick together. (Of course, some who grew up with brothers might believe that when Paul tells Timothy to treat younger men like brothers, he is telling him that it is okay to fistfight with the younger men in the church on a regular basis!)

Older women are to be treated just as Timothy would treat his own mother. Respect, obviously, must play an important part of this relationship. Older women, as we'll see later in this chapter, are of great value to the church, and they must be treated with the dignity their position deserves.

Younger women must be treated like sisters. Paul adds the phrase "in all purity" here, emphasizing the importance of Timothy staying pure in thoughts, motives and actions in regard to younger women. If it would be out of place in a brother-sister relationship, it is also out of place in a man-woman relationship within the church.

WEEK SEVEN

1 TIMOTHY 5

Of course, these instructions are not for Timothy alone, but for all within the household of God. Just think how many problems this “family-style” approach to relationships would solve!

CONCERNING WIDOWS

This chapter deals with the topic of widows for 14 of its 25 verses. Widows were obviously a segment of the church that demanded special attention. As we already saw in Acts 6, problems regarding the care of widows led to the appointment of seven men to deal with this issue. The seven men appointed to deal with this problem were the first deacons (although they weren’t given that title in Acts 6). So what we find here in 1 Timothy 5 are instructions that particularly apply to the work of a deacon.

Paul’s instructions regarding widows are quite simple – at least at first glance. He uses just one verse to tell the church how to deal with the widows among them.

Honor widows who are truly widows. 1 Timothy 5:3

Paul tells Timothy that true widows are to be honored. As used here, the verb translated honor, *timaō*, indicates much more than just an honoring attitude. The way Paul is using the word honor here refers to honoring and revering widows by providing for the needs that they cannot meet. Honoring, as used here, is financial. The widow’s great worth is demonstrated by the church caring for her needs.

timaō means “to honor, hold in esteem, place value on someone or something.” The verb includes showing respect to all people in general (1 Peter 2:17) and recognizing those with specific status or needs (1 Tim. 5:3). This act of honor can be shown in practical and concrete ways, as when the people of Malta provide for Paul and his shipmates in response to Paul’s healing them (Acts 28:10). The most common example of *timaō* is the honor that one should pay to one’s parents (i.e., the fifth commandment; see Mt. 15:4; 15:6; 19:19; Mk. 7:10; 10:19; Lk. 18:20; Eph. 6:2). When Judas is given thirty silver coins to betray Christ, it is an example of *timaō* being used for setting a price or value (Mt. 27:9).¹

Do we honor widows like this today? Are their needs being met by the church? Do we place more emphasis on building funds and missions and evangelism – all good things – than we place on the feeding and clothing and housing of our own? God forbid.

According to Paul this is an area the church is responsible for. So often, we look outward first. Our focus does need to be outward, but it must also be inward.

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:10

The importance of this task demonstrates the need for deacons. Caring for widows (and others who, like widows, cannot meet their own needs) is not an easy task. That is why the standards for deacons are so high. A task this important to the church demands men who are “full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (Acts 6:3).

But while Paul uses just one verse to tell the church how to deal with the widows among them, he uses the next 13 verses to outline exceptions to the instructions he has just given in verse three.

One exception to Paul’s instructions regarding widows in verse three concerns widows with children or grandchildren. The church is not to take responsibility off of the shoulders of children and grandchildren by providing care which the family members should be providing themselves. If a widow has children and grandchildren, they, not the church, are to provide for her.

¹ William D. Mounce (General Editor), *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), p. 340.

But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. 1 Timothy 5:4

Verse four lists three specific reasons children and grandchildren are to provide for their parents and grandparents:

1. It is a way they show godliness to their families.
2. It is a small return to their parents for raising them.
3. It is pleasing to God.

There is a fourth reason children and grandchildren are to provide for their parents and grandparents: it takes a burden off the church. If children and grandchildren provide for their own relatives, then the church is able to better meet the needs of those who have no relatives.

This is not “super” Christianity being discussed here. It is normal. Paul considers caring for parents and grandparents mandatory for believers.

But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 Timothy 5:8²

Now that Paul has outlined the general principle, he moves on to specifics, outlining the standards for which widows should and should not “be enrolled”.

Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. 1 Timothy 5:9-10

It is not exactly clear what being “enrolled” means. Based on the context, it appears to suggest a list the church had of widows who were to be supported. It is significant that there were standards that the widows had to meet in order to be enrolled. In our day and age, it is almost shocking to see standards like this, for we tend to think that the church owes care to all, no matter who they are and how they have lived or are living (or whether they are part of the fellowship of believers or not). But here, Paul is saying that certain standards must be met before widows may be enrolled.

Paul did not want younger widows to be enrolled on such a list. He thought it led to idleness, and that these women, if enrolled, would become gossips and busybodies.

But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith. Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. 1 Timothy 5:11-13

For this reason, Paul’s encouragement to younger widows was not that they be enrolled on a list, but that they remarry.

So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. For some have already strayed after Satan. 1 Timothy 5:14-15

Do you see the wisdom providing care within the church takes? This is no one-size-fits-all program Paul is advocating here. Again, the deacons must be men who are full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit. This is no position for the faint-of-heart or weak-of-faith. They must be men who can, when necessary, say no.

² Here, Paul seems to extend the obligations beyond just parents and grandparents to also include “relatives”. See also 1 Timothy 5:16 in this regard.

WEEK SEVEN

1 TIMOTHY 5

In verse 16, Paul reiterates the principle that believers should take care of their own family members.

If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are really widows.

1 Timothy 5:16

The church's responsibilities are great. The livelihood of many people who otherwise could not provide for their own needs rests upon the generosity of the church. The saints must learn to care for their own family members, so that the responsibilities left to the church are manageable.

Admittedly, times have changed from these days in the first century. Social security, insurance, and Medicare were not available to the widows in the church in Ephesus. However, the fact that they are available today does not relieve the church of her responsibilities. How is your church doing in this regard? Do you consider the needs of the widows and older couples within your fellowship? Does anyone know if their needs are being met? Are the deacons in your church, if you have deacons, concerned with these matters? Or is their role mainly with the upkeep of the church building itself, ushering, and collecting the offerings?

It is worth noting, as we consider the help the church is to bring to believers in need, that Paul does not believe the church should provide help to everyone who may say that they are in need. In fact, in the passage below, Paul specifically tells the believers *not* to feed certain people.

Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

It is also worth noting, and exciting to consider, the implications caring for the widows in this manner would have for evangelism. Aren't we to be known by our love for one another? Don't you think the world would see this and desire it for themselves? Are we trying, in any way, to buy converts? No. But, by the same token, we are fully aware that the world is watching how we live. Let them see something that is utterly unlike anything they might find in the world.

CONCERNING ELDERS

The connection between the section concerning widows and this section concerning elders may be found in the word honor. If widows are to be honored, elders, as well, must be honored. In fact, they are to be "considered worthy of double honor".

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. 1 Timothy 5:17

Remember, honor has to do with the value we place on something. The church demonstrates the value it places on widows by caring for their financial needs. How does the church demonstrate the value it places on its elders? It considers them worthy of "double honor". The church must not take advantage of those who "rule well" and "labor in preaching and teaching". It must see that they, like the widows, are taken care of. To prove that this is so, Paul quotes two different sources.

For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages." 1 Timothy 5:18

The first quote, at first glance, seems to apply more to livestock than it does to elders in the church. However, Paul is not taking this text out of context. As he makes clear in his letter to the church in Corinth, this law was not primarily written so that oxen might be well cared for.

For it is written in the Law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? 1 Corinthians 9:9-12

If oxen were guaranteed, by the Law, the right to eat of the grain which they were treading, shouldn't elders have the same right? Does God value oxen above his servants? Of course not. The church must consider the elders worthy of double honor.

Paul's second quote, “The laborer deserves his wages”, is taken from Jesus' instructions to his disciples when he sent them to preach and heal among “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:6).

*“Acquire no gold nor silver nor copper for your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics nor sandals nor a staff, for the laborer deserves his food.”
Matthew 10:9-10*

The disciples were not to worry about caring for themselves. They were to concentrate on preaching the word, healing, raising the dead, and casting out demons. Their labor in doing this was, according to Jesus, deserving of food. In other words, their work was worthy of payment. The same is true of the elders who serve among us – especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

Again, we honor those things that we value. As a church, we demonstrate that we value the widows by honoring them in practical ways. In the same way, we demonstrate that we value our elders by honoring them in practical ways. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:11, “If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?”.

Are all elders worthy of this honor? No. Those who “rule well” and “who labor in preaching and teaching” are worthy of this honor. The church is not obligated to provide care for those who do not deserve it.

Now that Paul has addressed how the church is to honor its elders, he moves on to the stickier topic of what to do if a charge is levied against an elder.

Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 1 Timothy 5:19

This, as with the words regarding oxen, came directly from the Law.

“A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.” Deuteronomy 19:15

Malicious witnesses may arise within the church who would seek to destroy an elder. This is written to prevent such false attacks from destroying the elder's life and ministry. We must be aware that there are many enemies of the cross, and these enemies are not above lying in order to reach their objectives. We must also understand that in these last days, false charges will increase. By adhering to the principle stated here, we protect ourselves against the devil's schemes.

WEEK SEVEN

1 TIMOTHY 5

However, there are times when the accusations are true. What should happen when an elder does sin?

As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. 1 Timothy 5:20

An elder who persists in sin – that is, he is unrepentant regarding the sin he has committed and he continues in it – is to be rebuked publicly. The church is not to sweep sin under the rug. Rather, we are to bring all things into the light. If we make a practice of this, it will increase fear among the people and the elders. This type of fear, unlike most fear, is a good fear. It is the kind of fear that keeps one from sinning. For if sin is dealt with publicly in the church, I know that eventually, I will be found out if I walk in sin. Far better to walk in innocence than to have my guilt displayed to all.

All this said, we must avoid a rush to public tribunals. We cannot forget Jesus' words in Matthew 18.

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.” Matthew 18:15-17

Just how seriously did Paul take his words here? The next verse shows the awful importance of obeying these commands.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. 1 Timothy 5:21

Wow! Paul called God, Jesus and the elect angels to witness this charge to Timothy. It is as if he said, “Timothy, I have asked God, Jesus and the angels to personally watch you and see if you keep these rules. You are accountable to all of us in this matter. Don't show favorites. Obey these rules. We're watching.” Any thoughts Timothy might have had about ignoring these commands were effectively wiped out by this charge. Timothy now had an audience.

Now that Paul has discussed how to honor elders and how to deal with sin in their lives, he moves on to the topic of ordaining of elders.

Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. 1 Timothy 5:22

As with deacons, who are to be “tested first” (1 Timothy 3:10), elders are not to be ordained in haste. Time must pass before hands are laid on a man ordaining him as an elder. If we lay hands on someone too fast, and there is sin in his life, we are, in effect, taking part in his sin. Timothy would keep himself pure by only ordaining those who were pure. Ordaining a wicked man would be tantamount to sharing in his sin.

Paul's advice in this matter was simple: take your time.

The sins of some men are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden. 1 Timothy 5:24-25

Week Eight

1 TIMOTHY 6

DAY ONE

Read 1 Timothy 6 through twice. The first time through the chapter, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the chapter at this time. The second time through the chapter, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the verses leave you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

1 TIMOTHY 6

Let all who are under a yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. ² Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved.

Teach and urge these things. ³ If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, ⁴ he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, ⁵ and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. ⁶ Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

¹¹ But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, ¹⁴ to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

²⁰ O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,” ²¹ for by professing it some have swerved from the faith.

Grace be with you.

WEEK EIGHT

1 TIMOTHY 6

WEEK EIGHT

1 TIMOTHY 6

DAY TWO

Read *1 Timothy 6:1-2*

1. According to verse one, what are slaves to do in regard to their masters?

2. Many of these slaves may have been owned by wicked and cruel people. Do you think Paul expected slaves in that type of situation to do this? If so, how would this be possible?

3. Why did Paul tell the slaves to do this?

4. Do you think these verses apply in any way to our culture? For instance, how do they apply, if at all, to employee/employer relations?

5. Do you, if you have a supervisor, regard him or her as worthy of honor? Would your supervisor agree with your answer?

6. Paul provides special instructions for slaves with believing masters. What are they?

7. As many as half of the people within the church in Ephesus may have been slaves. What impact would it have had within the church if slaves did not obey Paul's words in verse two?

8. What sort of relations do you think slaves and masters had within the church? For instance, would it be difficult for a slave to be an elder in the church and his master to be under his authority? How do you think the church might have handled this situation?

9. Paul addressed words to slaves in Ephesians 6:5-8 and Colossians 3:22-25. Do you find any additional commands for slaves in these passages? If so, what are they?

10. Why do you think Paul addresses slaves' attitudes and work ethic in these verses, rather than focusing on the evils of slavery?

DAY THREE

Read *1 Timothy 6:3-10*

11. In verses three through ten, Paul turns his attention back to the false teachers. How does he describe them in these verses?

12. What do the false teachers have a craving for?

13. The false teachers were neither godly nor content. We are called to be both. What words does Paul use to describe the combination of godliness and contentment? *1 Timothy 6:6*

WEEK EIGHT

1 TIMOTHY 6

14. What is the point Paul is making in verse seven?

15. Based on verse eight, how much does a person need in order to be content?

16. If this is the case, why do so many Christians seem to lack true contentment?

17. Are you content? Where are you seeking your contentment from?

18. What are the warnings to those who “desire to be rich”?

19. How can a person maintain a right relationship with money?

DAY FOUR

Read *1 Timothy 6:11-16*

20. In verse 11, Paul turns his attention to Timothy. First he tells him to flee from something. Next he tells him to pursue other things. What is he to flee from? What is he to pursue?

21. Are you doing these things?

22. What do you think happens in the Christian's life when these words are not obeyed?

23. What is Timothy told to do in verse 12? What does this mean? How do you think he was to do these things?

24. In verse 13, Paul again charges Timothy in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus. What is the charge and why do you think he used such a strong charge here?

25. In verses 15 and 16, Paul seems to spontaneously erupt in praise for God. How does he describe him? What do Paul's words here tell you about his view of God?

DAY FIVE

Read *1 Timothy 6:17-21*

26. Verses 17 through 19 are addressed to the rich. What is Timothy to charge the rich not to do?

27. What is Timothy to charge the rich to do?

WEEK EIGHT

1 TIMOTHY 6

28. What benefit does following these commands bring to the rich? *1 Timothy 6:19*

29. Do you consider yourself rich?

30. Do you think Paul would consider you rich?

31. Does this change how you read these words?

32. If you are rich, are you keeping the words here? Why or why not?

33. What would need to change in your lifestyle for more money to be freed up so that you could be more generous?

34. If the rich within the church do not obey Paul's words here, do you think it is possible for the church to care for the widows the way it is described in chapter five?

35. Verses 20 and 21 contain final instructions to Timothy. What are they?

36. Based on Paul's words here, do you think he had any concerns that Timothy was perhaps in over his head, or that he might, like so many others, swerve from the faith?

37. What does Paul mean by the phrase, “Grace be with you”?

DAY SIX

Read the study notes for chapter six.

1 TIMOTHY 6

In this letter, Paul has given Timothy specific instructions regarding false teachers, women, elders, deacons, and widows. He is nearly done. But he has yet to provide instructions for what was, perhaps, the largest people group within the church in Ephesus – the slaves.

PAUL’S WORDS TO THE SLAVES

It is claimed that half the population of the Roman Empire in the first century was composed of slaves.¹

If this is the case, it is easy to see why Paul made it a point to specifically address the topic of slave-master relationships, for this would have been a significant concern within the early church.

Let all who are under a yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor ... 1 Timothy 6:1

Notice, Paul is not speaking of the evils of slavery as an institution. Rather, he speaks here of the need for slaves to consider their masters as worthy of all honor. He is talking, primarily, about an attitude here.

Were all the masters deserving of this honor? Obviously not. Many masters treated their slaves cruelly. Many were unfair. Many were overly demanding. Many were ungodly. They were not deserving of honor based on their actions. They were deserving of honor based on their position. The master was the authority in the slave’s life, and therefore must be treated with honor.

This was no small matter to Paul, because the slaves’ obedience to this command directly related to how the pagans viewed God and the gospel message.

... so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. 1 Timothy 6:1

There is a direct cause and effect relationship here. If the slaves dishonored their masters, the unbelievers would see this and would revile God and the gospel.

Obviously, some of the slaves had believing masters. How were the slaves to treat masters who were also Christians?

Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved. 1 Timothy 6:1-2

The slaves with believing masters were to work even harder. Why? Because “those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved”. Do you treat the brothers and sisters in this way? Do you see them as worthy of the very best you can do, simply because they believe and are loved by God? As with the masters referred to in verse one, the masters in verse two are not treated this way because of their behavior. They are to be treated better because of their position. They are believers and loved by God, therefore they are worthy of the very best service.

¹ Ralph Earle, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume 11: 1, 2 Timothy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), p. 382.

WEEK EIGHT

1 TIMOTHY 6

How does all of this relate to those who are not slaves? It is not difficult to transfer these truths to employee/employer relationships. Employees must see their employers as worthy of honor simply because of their position as an authority. If we do not consider them as worthy of honor, the world will see this and will revile the name of God and the gospel. This obviously rules out gossiping about those we work for, denigrating their decisions, and complaining about their treatment of us. Even if our co-workers participate in this sort of behavior, we must not. The glory of God is at stake here. We must be careful to honor those we work for.

And if, by God's providence, our employers are believers, we must double our efforts. When we do this, we are bringing "benefit" to the saved! What a joy to work for those who are dearly loved by the Lord.

What a standard! Oh God, open our eyes to these truths. Let us give our best in every situation, not because we are compulsive workaholics, but because we are looking to your glory and are concerned with your fame. The unsaved are watching. May they not revile you and your gospel on our account.

THE GREED OF THE FALSE TEACHERS

These are the things Paul urged Timothy to teach to the church in Ephesus.

Teach and urge these things. 1 Timothy 6:2

As Timothy taught these things, the church would grow in strength and maturity.

Unfortunately, Timothy was not the only one teaching and urging the saints within the church. Other forces were at work. So, once again, Paul turns his attention to the false teachers. In this passage he particularly focuses on their character and their motivation.

If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. 1 Timothy 6:3-4

What is the character of those who would teach false doctrines? They are proud and they are ignorant. In other words, they are fools. Their pride and their ignorance are a deadly combination, as the book of Proverbs makes clear.

Let a man meet a she-bear robbed of her cubs rather than a fool in his folly. Proverbs 17:12

The false teachers are hungry, with an insatiable appetite for trouble.

He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. 1 Timothy 6:4-5

The false teachers crave "controversy" and "quarrels about words". This should not surprise us, for it is the very nature of a fool.

It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling. Proverbs 20:3

A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back. Proverbs 29:11

The false teachers attempt to drown the twin blessings of the gospel, grace and peace, in the polluted waters of quarrels and controversies. These twin evils produce a stirred-up, angry, divisive population within the church. But is that the false teachers' final goal? No, it is not. They also crave money, believing they can cash in on the power they are gaining in the church. Godliness, in their

minds, is “a means of gain” – not gain for the entire church, of course, for they do not care about the life of the church, but gain for themselves.

But that is not what godliness is about. Those who are godly aren’t looking for their own wealth here on earth. They desire God’s glory. Their contentment is not found in personal gain. They are content because they are in Christ.

Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 1 Timothy 6:6-8

Are you content? Or are you always looking for more? Here, Paul says that contentment can be had even with nothing but the most basic of necessities. How is this possible? It is possible because the godly are able to recognize the difference between true wealth and worldly wealth. The godly know that they are already rich. They have need of nothing beyond Christ. They are waiting for their reward. This knowledge produces contentment. The ungodly, on the other hand, believe worldly wealth is the answer to the barrenness in their souls.

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. 1 Timothy 6:9-10

The desire to be rich is a snare, plunging the ungodly into “ruin and destruction”. It is important to note that Paul is not saying that money itself is evil. It is necessary for life and ministry. But the love of money (or possessions) is evil. It is a root that many evils grow out of. It is so powerful it even blinds the eyes of believers, causing some to wander away from the faith. Think of that! The love of money causes some to trade the true riches of Christ for the false riches of this world! What a tragedy.

Jesus’ words are a safe-guard for the believer.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:19-21

PAUL’S WORDS CONCERNING TIMOTHY

Paul introduces the next section with the words, “But as for you, O man of God ...”. These are not words about how Timothy is to pastor the church in Ephesus. They are words about how he is to pastor his own life. Any man or woman of God would do well to pay close attention to these words.

But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 1 Timothy 6:11-12

Timothy is to run away from a love of money. He is to run away from quarrels and controversy. But his life is not to be marked by fleeing from things. It is to be marked by his never flagging pursuit of righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness. These are the goals of our faith. Righteousness,² godliness and the other attributes listed here don’t simply settle in on the saved. We are to chase them down, tackle them and make them our own. There is an aggression

² This is not referring to the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to the believer. We don’t continually pursue that righteousness. We receive it as a gift at the moment we profess Jesus as Lord. The righteousness Paul refers to here is the righteous life that God expects from his righteous saints.

WEEK EIGHT

1 TIMOTHY 6

that is called for here – “flee”, “pursue”, “fight”, and “take hold” are Paul’s words. Would these words describe your spiritual life? They could. Decide today to join the heroes of the faith who have fought the good fight.

The good fight of the faith is just that. It is good, and it is a fight. There is no promise that you will get through this fight unscathed. In fact, you will not. But, if you fight with the power of the Lord, you will win.

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Ephesians 6:13

Oh, don’t you want this to be the testimony of your life? That you took up God’s armor, and withstood in the evil day. This is your inheritance as a saint. Fight the good fight. Don’t be afraid of black eyes and bloodied knuckles. Rather, be afraid of disgracing the name of our Savior.

It takes this sort of aggressiveness to “take hold of the eternal life to which you were called”. Eternal life is something we are given, but it is also something that we take hold of. Eternal life is God’s kind of life, and we are called to live that life now.

Paul alludes to the fact that Timothy made a confession about this eternal life in front of many witnesses. It is not clear when or where this confession took place. It was perhaps at his baptism, where, in front of all the saints in Lystra, Timothy made the “good confession” about his trust in the Lord Jesus. In any case, Paul reminds Timothy of this “good confession” and of the witnesses who heard it.

This is not the only “good confession” Paul refers to in this chapter. Just one verse after speaking of Timothy’s “good confession”, Paul reminds Timothy of “the good confession” Jesus made before Pontius Pilate.

I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession ...
1 Timothy 6:13

What was this good confession? Paul does not say, but Jesus spoke some very powerful words to Pilate, encompassing, in just a few sentences, who he was and why he had come. He told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). He also told him, “For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world – to bear witness to the truth” (John 18:37). Timothy needed to be reminded of these things, not because he had forgotten them, but because the reminders would bring him strength.

As he did in 5:21, when Paul charged Timothy “In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels”, Paul once again calls heavenly witnesses to witness his final charge to Timothy.

I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time – he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. 1 Timothy 6:13-16

The final charge is simple: don’t fail. Paul is telling Timothy, in essence, “I’m calling both Father and Son to watch you and to see that you keep these words perfectly. They’re watching to see that you bring no reproach on the gospel.” How would you like this charge spoken to you? How would it change the way you lived? Paul is not playing around in this letter. He expects Timothy to do all he says, keeping “the commandment” until “the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

His appearing, for all of us, is the finish line we are running toward. When we finally see Jesus face to face, we will be able to take a rest and prepare to start anew in the new heaven and new earth. But until that time, “which he will display at the proper time”, we run on. This is not the time to slow to a walk or to stop altogether.

Notice what happens as Paul closes this charge to Timothy. As he did in 1 Timothy 1:17, Paul cannot help launching into praise for God.

... he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. 1 Timothy 6:15-16

Even after ministering for decades, Paul has not lost his sense of wonder regarding the Lord. He is absolutely enthralled with him. What about you? Do you ever consider the greatness of God? Why not tell him, right now, what you think of him?

PAUL’S WORDS CONCERNING THE RICH

Paul turns his attention from Timothy to those who are wealthy – the polar opposites of the slaves he addressed at the beginning of this chapter.

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Paul does not condemn the rich because they have money. There is nothing wrong with that. Remember, it is the love of money, not money itself, that is a root of all kinds of evil. However, there is something wrong with pride in riches. There is something wrong with trusting in riches. The rich, just as much as the poor, are to set their hopes on God. The rich need to remember that he is the one from whom all blessings come.

Paul knew that riches, in the hands of a righteous man or woman, could be used for great good. That is why he encourages the rich to “do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share”. When the rich do this, they are laying a foundation for the future. They are not losing their money. Instead, they are ensuring that they might keep it forever.

By the way, it is easy to read these words and think, “I’m not rich. These words apply to someone else.” We must remember that the standard for what rich is has changed. Paul’s words apply to a majority of Americans. We are the richest people that have ever lived. So, for most of us, Paul’s words apply directly to us. How do you measure up to the standard Paul lays out for the rich? If, as he did to Timothy on two different matters, Paul called the Father and Son as witnesses of your obedience in this area of life, what changes would you be forced to make? It is worth considering, for they are our witnesses. The wealth, after all, came from them.

FINAL WORDS

Paul’s final words are for Timothy alone.

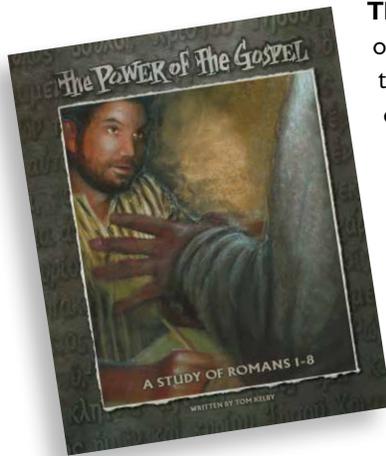
O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,” for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. 1 Timothy 6:20-21

“O Timothy”. These two words speak volumes about Paul’s love for the young man. I’m sure tears were falling from Paul’s eyes as these final words were written. Paul knew that he had placed Timothy in a very dangerous situation. False teachers were ravaging the church. Once faithful saints were swerving from the faith. Paul must have wondered, at times, whether Timothy would join their ranks.

³ As we mentioned in a previous lesson, the word “you” here is plural. Paul’s intent was not just that Timothy receive grace. His desire was for grace to be poured out on all the church in Ephesus.

Additional Bible Study Resources

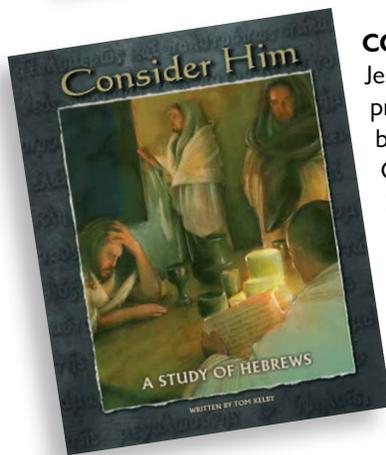
FROM HANDS TO THE PLOW MINISTRIES



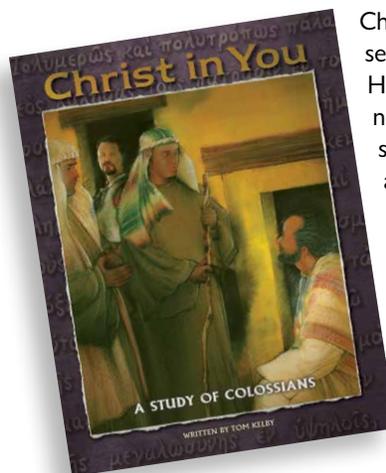
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¹ John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Romans 1-8* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991), p. ix.