



Bible Study

1 Timothy

1 Timothy 1

We know that the apostle, Paul, wrote many letters to the churches and we value the principles and foundational truths that are so clearly presented. In addition to these letters, Paul wrote two letters to Timothy and one to Titus. These have become known as 'Pastoral Letters'. They contain teaching and instruction to guide and help Timothy and Titus as they represent Paul in Ephesus and Crete. Everyone with aspirations for Christian leadership should read them carefully.

True Son in the Faith

Paul begins by addressing Timothy as a true son in the faith. It seems that there was a time when Paul led Timothy to Christ and there was a special relationship between Paul and this young man. Raising up sons and daughters in Christ is a challenge and privilege we should still desire to have today.

The Charge to Timothy

Timothy is charged to deal with false doctrine and myths, which confuse and divide instead of advancing the work of God. Paul's presentation of the gospel is all linked to love, purity, a sound conscience and sincerity of faith. Paul observes that this is sometimes absent. There is impurity; there is a propensity to induce guilt and superficiality. The law of God is there to bring clarity to what is right and what is wrong and is able to point us to Christ who alone can meet our deepest needs. The glory of the gospel is that God has granted grace to us who, outside of Christ, are in a hopeless situation. We must aim to be 'Timothys' in our ministry and not neglect the challenge to provoke righteous behaviour in the church. We must also aim to bring a balance which, though maintaining high standards, does not mean legalism, missing the heart of God.

Correction and Discipline

Paul urges Timothy to respond to the challenge of bringing correction to the Church. He is confident to entrust this mission to Timothy, because he was present when Timothy received prayer and prophetic words were spoken over his life. Timothy is not just doing a job but he is operating in the calling that God has placed upon him. Paul describes some, whose faith has been shipwrecked by the storms and winds of confusion, deception, false teaching and misleading doctrines. He names two people in particular: Hymenaeus and Alexander, who have been instrumental in bringing destruction to the faith of some. Paul has placed them in Satan's hands, separated from the body of Christ, with a desire that they should repent and be restored to the body of Christ.

Paul's Testimony and Experience

Paul himself is deeply indebted to the grace of God that came to him, even though he was a blasphemer and a destroyer of Christians. He found in Christ a completely different way of life. He describes himself as the worst of sinners and is full of appreciation for the wonderful work of Christ, that has saved him and granted to him, eternal life. He regards Jesus as the eternal King, the immortal, invisible and only true God, who should be honoured for ever and ever. His main motivation to live and serve is Christ.

God's Call

We, ourselves, may feel like Timothy, who was handed a great responsibility. Think about God's call on your life, about the promises that you have been given and the things that have been shared with you as people have prayed for you. Reflect on these things and give thanks to God!

Points to Consider:

1. Are you operating out of God's call or your own ideas?
2. How do you maintain purity, a good conscience and the ability to avoid insincerity and vain statements?
3. What false teaching do we have to contend with today?
4. How appreciative are we of the grace of God that has come to us?
5. Are we prepared, if necessary, to bring strong discipline to those who are bringing damage upon the body of Christ?

1 Timothy 2

Paul has entrusted Timothy with the task of encouraging the church in Ephesus.

Instructions on Worship

The prayer life of the church is very important and prayer must be varied. Petitions generally relate to requests for ourselves and our own local situation. Intercession is where we look at the wider world and look for God's intervention and His will to be done. Thanksgiving is always important, because it is so easy to make requests and forget to thank God for the answers. It is also important for the church to remember those who are in authority; a country that is governed well can provide an environment where it is possible to preach the gospel. However, where there is civil war and strife, it is very difficult to move around and preach the gospel. We need to look at our church's prayer life and think about how it compares with Paul's charge to Timothy.

Jesus, Saviour and Redeemer

Jesus is the only true God and Saviour. We need to preach with the conviction that God wants all people to know salvation and the truth of who Christ is. We appreciate that not everyone will respond to our message but we must still make sure that everyone knows about Christ.

Christ is the only mediator between men and God. There is only one name that we can mention in our prayers to get access to God; it is the name of Jesus. Others may include the names of various saints but there is only one name that we can confidently mention; it is Jesus, who has paid the price to release us from our sins and from the curse of the devil.

The Apostle Paul

Paul sees his calling as like that of a herald. He proclaims and trumpets the name of Jesus. His apostolic work is to lay the foundation of Jesus in every church that he plants. His appointment has come from God to reach out to all people but especially the Gentiles.

Praying Men

It is important to value the prayers of men and women but, often, men neglect to pray and leave it to the sisters to do this work. Timothy is to exhort men to lift up their hands and call upon God. Often, men have used their hands to settle disputes and fights, instead of lifting up the name of Jesus in prayer. It is important in all cultures and people groups, to encourage men to take up the responsibility of calling upon God in prayer.

Women Worshipping God

Paul feels the need to challenge the issue of women's dress in the place of worship and, indeed, in life. He is aware that some have adopted inappropriate and excessive interest in the way that they dress and adorn themselves. This is a distraction and indicates more interest in physical appearance than in spiritual. Paul addresses this issue because, clearly, it was a problem but it would be wrong to imply that all women were guilty of excessive behaviour.

Paul further states that women should learn in quiet and full submission and that they should not assume authority over a man. However, he also exhorts men and women to prophesy and the exhortation to sing or share a Psalm and contribute to the body of Christ, is not exclusive but for all believers, both men and women. The main issue many believe, is the issue of authority. In marriage, God has given authority and holds men accountable for their marriages. They are called to love their wives as Christ loves the Church. This requires total unselfishness and great respect towards the wife. Men who desire authority but do not demonstrate this love will be accountable to God.

Paul also makes the comment about bearing children. We need to treat this with caution but we do acknowledge that, when God chose to send our Saviour into this world, he was born of a woman who demonstrated great faith and obedience to submit to the will of God.

Points to Consider:

1. Worship must be in the spirit but not chaotic. Look at your worship and your church's worship. Are you achieving this balance?
2. How do we encourage men to pray more effectively in the church?
3. How seriously do we take our responsibility to pray for those in authority over us?
4. How would you describe the work of Christ as our mediator?
5. Do the problems that Paul addresses regarding women and their dress, apply today? Are there issues among men of equal significance that need to be addressed?
6. How well do you feel the balance is achieved of honouring and respecting the role of women in the church, alongside the issue of where authority lies?

1 Timothy 3

One of Timothy's main functions was to appoint leaders in the churches that Paul had planted. He is given instructions regarding qualifications required for elders and also what is required for deacons.

Elders

An elder is an overseer, whose task is to watch over the work of God, to assess as accurately as possible the spiritual state of the fellowship. He is to bring leadership, discipline and direction but is someone who listens very carefully to God's people and, therefore, is not a dictator. It is highly preferable that a church should have elders, not just one, to work together in watching over God's people. It is not appropriate to appoint a new convert, people need to demonstrate that their faith is genuine and a period of time to show that one is secure in the faith, is wise.

Deacons

There is discussion among theologians regarding this word but many are comfortable with what happens in the book of Acts (Chapter 6). A dispute arose between Hebrew and Greek widows regarding the level of care they were receiving from the church. The apostles decided that 7 people, full of the spirit and wisdom, should be given the task of seeing that a fair and orderly distribution for the widows should take place. In many churches, the role of deacon has developed out of this early model, to be a task of caring for the practical needs and good administration of church affairs, so that things are done decently and in order. It is important to note that the spiritual qualifications for these practical duties are very high. However we serve the people of God, our walk with Him is crucial if our contribution is to be effective.

Qualifications for Elders

Someone above reproach. There must be no stains or hidden areas and elder must be transparent and godly.

Faithful to their wife. Marriage is a picture of Christ and His church, therefore the marriage of elders must speak consistently about love, faithfulness and submission.

Exercising self-control. People who have no excesses in their lifestyle, who are not prone to outbursts of anger but who sensitively minister to the flock of God.

Handling money well. This is a very important area, because dishonesty, corruption and greed will be destructive to the body of Christ.

Hospitable. The home of an elder must be welcoming, being willing to share what we have with the body of Christ.

Managing their family well. We have already spoken about marriage but an elder needs to raise his children well and be proportionate in exercising love and discipline, because what we do in the church will come out of our home and family life.

Able to teach. Elders must have the ability to communicate clearly, the values and principles of the church. Such enlightened sharing helps us to effectively lead God's people into truth.

Qualifications for Deacons

Deacons must also exercise self-control and must be living lives which command respect. They must be people of integrity and must clearly reveal that they understand and live the foundational truths of our faith.

It is good to observe a believer operating in areas of service and when that is seen, then they can be appointed as deacons.

Faithfulness in marriage and a good family life are very important.

Women

Paul indicates that women in the church are to be respected and their integrity noted where it is evident. Godly women will not be gossips but will be self-controlled and trustworthy.

Conclusion

Those who serve as elders and deacons will be greatly blessed by God in their personal walk with Him and will also be honoured by the Church.

Paul explains that God's people need to know how they should behave in God's household, His church. The appointment of leaders is crucial in this matter. The church is meant to be a place where the life of God is evident, where the truth of God is foundational and where Jesus is clearly seen as truly man but also truly God. Jesus was seen to be full of the Holy Spirit, angels attended his ministry, he is the Saviour for all nations and, at this moment, is sitting at the right hand of the Father, exalted in glory!

Points to Consider:

1. It is important to note that much more is made of character than gifting, in terms of the qualifications of elders and deacons. How do you respond to this and are you achieving this balance when you make choices about leaders?
2. Paul is concerned that people do not fall into the 'devils trap'. How can we seek to avoid this problem?
3. What provision do you make, to encourage peoples' home life to be stable and secure?
4. Consider what you believe to be the deep truths of the faith (verse 9).
5. Our vision of the church and Jesus himself, will determine our priorities in appointing leaders.

1 Timothy 4

In this chapter, Paul continues to encourage Timothy in his ministry to the church at Ephesus and is keeping an eye upon Timothy's life and doctrine. It is important that Timothy teaches accurately but also that his lifestyle is a practical expression of what he teaches.

Last Days

Paul is aware that latter times will breed many hostile things for the Christian. There will be deception, immorality and hypocrisy.

Deception

Paul talks about those who will abandon simple faith in Christ and will spread false teaching, leading hypocritical lives full of ungodly rules that come from deceiving spirits. God wants us to be righteous in our body and in our Spirit. There is no excuse for sin in any shape or form. Some people's consciences are very acute and they are over-sensitive. Some people seem to be immune to any sense of right and wrong. Paul encourages Timothy to teach the truth, knowing that the truth will penetrate people's hearts. We need a healthy, biblical attitude, particularly regarding sexual expression.

Freedom

We need to walk in freedom, not legalism. However, we need to always respect and honour God's law.

Righteous Living

God is good. What He has created is good and we are encouraged to enjoy all that He has provided for us. We are to be grateful and thankful for God's goodness. When we respond with hearts rooted in the word and rooted in prayerfulness, we will set an example of how to live properly before God.

The Body of Christ

Timothy's ministry needs to feed, instruct, encourage and enrich the body of Christ. By being clear about the Gospel, being clear about the role of men and women, being clear about qualifications for leadership and being clear about appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, Timothy is preparing the body of Christ (the Church) to be a distinctive, mature people in a heathen society.

Training

Godliness is something which develops as we walk with Christ and as we discover the parameters that he has for our lives. When our lives walk on the path of truth, we have no time for diversions and distractions such as fanciful theories or delusions and misconceptions. Godliness has great value. Walking like Jesus - who is God - enables us to get the best out of this life and also equips us to spend eternity with him. Paul refers to these comments as *trustworthy sayings*.

Our Hope

Our hope is that we will be with Jesus forever. When this is our focus, we will be strengthened to run the race and to keep pressing on until we reach heaven. Jesus has made this possible but we do need to work at our Christian lives, to avoid going astray. We must not be complacent.

Concluding Exhortations

Paul says for Timothy to be bold, decisive and not to compromise. He also says to Timothy (in summary):

Do not let your age distract you. You are young but you have been called of God. Let people see your life and your conduct as an example to follow.

Devote yourself to reading scripture, preaching and teaching. Your gift is from God. Prophetic words were spoken over you as leaders prayed for you.

Be diligent and let your life and teaching speak loudly. Persevere, because your consistent walk will be for the spiritual benefit of yourself and those listening to you.

Words spoken over you need to be weighed and not neglected. Put yourself in a place where others pray for you, so that you can hear from God.

Points to Consider:

1. We must handle latter days with caution and wisdom. How do you approach life, realising that Jesus is coming soon?
2. How do you guard against deception and false teaching?
3. How do we find the balance between working very hard and yet enjoying the grace of God?
4. We must be focused and not be distracted from our calling. Timothy's calling is well described. What is your calling?
5. How can we make sure that our lives are speaking as powerfully as our words?

1 Timothy 5

Paul continues his instructions to Timothy, as he desires to help him establish things well in the church at Ephesus. The two main issues in this chapter are widows and elders. From its beginning, there was a clear intention to care for the poor and needy, and those acutely affected are widows and orphans. However, although the church has never deviated from this responsibility, it quickly became clear that some guidelines would be necessary. Again, although the need to raise up leaders was recognised, it was also clear that guidelines were required to protect leaders from wanton, foolish questioning but also to bring discipline where necessary.

Respect in the Body of Christ

Older men must be handled wisely and with honour. If they need correction, it must be gentle, not overbearing.

Younger men are to be regarded as brothers so, although there may be disagreement, let love and respect prevail.

Older women must receive the same care as one would give to a mother. Mothers are not perfect but must not be belittled or be criticised unkindly.

Younger women must be regarded as sisters and complete purity exercised in all dealings and relationships. A protective attitude, fuelled by loving respect.

Widows

It is important to distinguish between widows who have no one to support them, from those who have a family around them. It is good for a family to give all the care they can, rather than rely on the church.

Widows who have a vital relationship with God, who pray and seek to live righteous lives, must be honoured and not seen the same as widows who indulge in selfish pleasure, showing little regard for others and God.

Paul refers to a list, which indicated that widows who were over 60 years of age and therefore particularly vulnerable, should be given support and help. Their reputation needs to be good and pleasing to the community, as someone who has brought up her children well and been faithful to her husband.

Younger widows need guidance and spiritual encouragement to live Christ-like lives. Paul exhorts them to be open to marriage again, to find satisfaction in a godly way and to raise children. He implies that Satan is hard at work, seeking to entice people into sin. So, widows must seek a godly solution to their sense of loneliness and desire to be loved. Again, where family can help, that help must be given, rather than thoughtless reliance upon the church.

Elders

Double honour

Elders who serve well in the body of Christ should be supported by the church as best they can. Paul is not necessarily implying a right to be paid but he is showing the church that they must value and not take for granted, leaders in the body of Christ.

Preaching and teaching

Paul highlights that elders who feed, discipline and care for the flock by bringing sound doctrine and clear teaching, must be especially respected.

Accusations

Elders must be rebuked if and when they sin but it is important to avoid wasting time with people who just have personal vendettas and grudges. The requirement for 2 or 3 witnesses is a safeguard, so that accusations can be properly substantiated.

No favouritism

If elders are guilty of sin, it must be confronted and not overlooked. Timothy must be bold and deal with discipline matters publicly, to avoid any unhelpful gossip.

Laying on of hands

Setting aside people for leadership, needs to be conducted carefully and prayerfully. There is no need to rush.

Personal Note

Paul is aware of Timothy's stomach ailments and urges him to take a little wine to settle things for him.

Often sins are obvious and good deeds are obvious. What is in the heart will be revealed in the end.

Points to Consider:

1. How clear are we, regarding respect for each other in the body of Christ?
2. Do we have clear boundaries regarding the opposite sex?
3. Do we have a framework, whereby correction can be delivered in a godly, sensitive manner, but still properly delivered?
4. Do we have a policy regarding the care of widows? Have we thought through our own personal responsibilities towards the widow and the church's responsibilities?
5. How are we handling leaders and overseers (elders). Do we take them for granted? How do we honour them?
6. Do we handle these situations fairly or is there any bias in us?

1 Timothy 6

Here, Paul concludes his first letter to Timothy. In this chapter, he speaks about the relationship between slaves and masters, the necessity for clear doctrine, the pursuit of godliness and right values regarding money. He urges Timothy to concentrate on righteousness and godliness in his fight of faith. He further encourages Timothy to fix his eyes upon heaven and the eternal rewards available for those who persevere in Christ.

Working Relationships

To show honour, respect and obedience is good, even if we are not being well-treated. If our employer or master is a believer, we should not take advantage but still seek to serve in a godly way. Paul urges Timothy to teach these principles because he realises that they may not come naturally.

True Doctrine

It is essential that we build our understanding of life and values upon the words of the Lord Jesus. It is a waste of time to become embroiled in controversial and idle matters. Our doctrine does not come out of dispute or self-interest or a majority view. We believe what we believe because we hear the words of Jesus and see the character of Jesus, recognising that they are the same. The godliness that Jesus displayed, came out of a whole and complete personality. Error and falsehood come out of those who are confused or have depraved minds.

True Values

Many are disturbed because they put a disproportionate focus on material things. Paul reminds Timothy that we arrived in this world with nothing and we cannot take anything with us when we die. Therefore, he encourages us to be content with what we have and, thereby, avoid temptation. Note carefully that he does not say that money is a root of all kinds of evil but rather that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

Our Fight and our Call

Paul knows that Timothy is ministering into a very hostile situation. Hostile in morality and in false teaching. He urges Timothy to run away from all forms of sin and to engage strongly in spiritually resisting all attempts to undermine him. He desires that Timothy should fight the good fight of faith because, through our trust and dependence on God and our total reliance on His word, we will be able to overcome the enemy. Timothy has been called to serve the Lord and to be able to stand before Him, the one who is King of kings and Lord of lords, with confidence. Again, his call is to instruct and teach people to live righteously, in a

godly way because, left to themselves, they do not know what God requires. Timothy must not be distracted but must press on, thoroughly focused, doing the will of God.

Points to Consider:

1. Do we reflect on what we are teaching, to check that we are being true to scripture?
2. Do we assess our values and make sure that we are being shaped by God's word and not by the world?
3. We must overcome temptation and be alert to avoid sin. What practical steps can we take to do this?
4. How do we fight the good fight of faith? Do we feel a contradiction between fighting and trusting God?
5. What is your calling? Are you being faithful to that call? Are you trusting God or relying on yourself and your own resources?