1,2 Timothy; Titus

Summer 2019 > CSB

Johnny Hunt, General Editor
The reason for Jesus’ coming to earth was to save sinners. In Paul’s first letter to Timothy, he acknowledged that among sinners he was “the worst of them” (1 Timothy 1:15). Paul’s point was this: if Jesus would and could save someone like him, given who he was and what he had done, then Jesus is able to save anyone.

God’s grace abounds to all people who acknowledge their sin and place their faith in Jesus. The Bible tells us that God “wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” He has made a way possible for us to be forgiven of all our sin—it is through Jesus. “There is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:5–6).

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). He is waiting for you now.

• Admit to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin.

• By faith receive Jesus Christ as God’s Son and accept Jesus’ gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.

• Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: “Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.”

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.
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*Evangelistic Emphasis

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MEET THE WRITERS

Jere Phillips wrote the Bible commentary for these studies from 1,2 Timothy and Titus. Dr. Phillips is professor of Practical Theology at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Union University and the Master of Divinity and Doctor of Philosophy degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Nikki Wilbanks wrote the group Bible study plans for 1 Timothy. She has a background in commercial real estate appraisal and investment but is currently thrilled to be a stay-at-home mom, writer, and Bible study teacher. She is a graduate of Pepperdine University, where she studied literature. She lives with her husband and two children in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

Joseph Brasher wrote the group Bible study plans for 2 Timothy and Titus. He is adult ministry pastor at New Vision Baptist Church in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and a Ph.D candidate at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Cordova, Tennessee.
You will be blessed, encouraged, and challenged as you study 1, 2 Timothy and Titus. Paul, in his Pastoral Epistles, speaks from seemingly every possible angle about the Christian life—who we are in Christ, how we are to live our new lives in Christ, and even the qualities and characteristics of effective church leaders.

As a pastor of forty-two years, it has been my passion to lead the churches I have served to have a true love for the Bible. I believe the Bible is not just a truth to learn but the truth to obey. I also believe that deep within the heart of every true believer is a deep desire to know God better and to live the life of a difference maker.

As you engage in this study, you will quickly realize that the Christian life is a life of blessing, but it comes with its share of challenges. Whether the challenge is dealing with difficult people, false doctrinal teaching, or how to instruct a disciple, these three epistles will leave no rock unturned.

My deep love for Explore the Bible comes from a mutual love for expositional teaching. I love it when a writer simply lifts the truth from the text and gives glorious insight, instruction, and inspiration from the passage.

The studies in this book will give a clear understanding of each Scripture passage under consideration. They will tackle the tough passages with clarity and provide helpful answers that will lead you to have a better grasp of truth. Invite others to join you in your Bible study group for an enlightening journey with the apostle Paul.

Johnny Hunt

Johnny Hunt, longtime senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Georgia, and past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, recently joined the North American Mission Board as senior vice president of evangelism and leadership. He has written numerous books, including Demolishing Strongholds.
Terms listed here are identified in the Bible commentary with a dot (•).

**Crete** [KREET]—An island in the Mediterranean Sea, approximately 170 miles in length and 35 miles wide; Cretans were among those listed as present on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:11) and the gospel may have reached the island through them; Paul assigned Titus the responsibility of caring for the churches in Crete.

**Elders**—One of three terms in the New Testament used to relate to the office of pastor, including overseer (or bishop) and shepherd; it designated those who gave leadership to the church, particularly in the role of overseeing church ministries and preaching the gospel.

**Ephesus** [EF uh suhs]—A city in Asia Minor (modern Turkey); at the time of Paul it was probably the fourth largest city in the world; Paul stayed in Ephesus longer than he did in any other city (Acts 19:10); he assigned Timothy the task of helping the church at Ephesus with its difficulties.

**Eunice** [YOO niss]—A personal name meaning “victorious”; the mother of Timothy, she was a Jewish woman who was married to a Gentile; instrumental in nurturing Timothy in the faith (2 Tim. 1:5).

**Hymenaeus** [HIGH meh NEE uhs]—He taught a false doctrine about the resurrection, along with Philetus (2 Tim. 2:17-18) and was put out of the church (1 Tim. 1:20).

**Lois** [LOH iss]—the mother of Eunice and grandmother of Timothy; instrumental in nurturing Timothy in the faith (2 Tim. 1:5).

**Overseer**—One of three terms in the New Testament used to relate to the office of pastor, including elder and shepherd; it designated those who gave leadership to the church, particularly in the role of overseeing church ministries and preaching the gospel.

**Philetus** [fih LEE tuhs]—Along with Hymenaeus, he taught a false doctrine about the resurrection (2 Tim. 2:17-18).

**Titus** [TIGH tuhs]—A Gentile believer and associate of Paul; accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1); assigned by Paul the responsibility of overseeing the churches of Crete.

**Trustworthy**—The word means reliable, worthy of full confidence. Paul used the phrase “this saying is trustworthy” five times in the Pastoral Letters (1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8); it indicated familiar teachings regarding articles of belief deeply cherished and possibly served as confessions in public worship in the first-century church.
BEFORE THE GROUP TIME

1. **Study the core passage.**
   Start preparing early. Read the passage, listing people, places, key words, key phrases, and actions taken. Use the commentary included in the *Explore the Bible Leader Guide*, the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary*, and *Biblical Illustrator* to discover information about the items you listed. Write a summary of the truths you discovered using the statement printed under the session title of each session as a starting place.

2. **Create a group time plan.**
   Identify the main idea of the session. Craft a group plan that helps the group discover and respond to the main idea. Consult the Group Plans in the *Explore the Bible Leader Guide* (includes ideas for using the *Personal Study Guide*). Identify ways to focus the group’s attention, explore the text, summarize the lesson, and challenge the group.
   For additional ideas or questions, consult *QuickSource* and *Explore the Bible Extra* (identifies a current event to introduce and conclude the lesson, found at Blog. LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible/adults/LeaderExtras). Review the *Explore the Bible Leader Pack* items, determining how to best use them in your group’s setting.

3. **Gather and review.**
   Use the list in Gather the Following Items list on the first page of each session as a starting place. Make sure you have additional copies of *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide* for anticipated guests.

DURING THE GROUP TIME

4. **Arrive early.**
   Make sure you are the first person to arrive. Pray as you set up the area. Greet everyone as participants arrive and focus their attention on the Bible study.

5. **Lead the group in a time of Bible study.**
   Use the plan you created, recording notes along the way to help you remember how the group responded. Remember, every group experience takes a few unexpected twists and turns; be flexible.

AFTER THE GROUP TIME

6. **Evaluate and Record.**
   Review Practice for ideas to encourage the group to put into practice the truths discovered. Record prayer requests and other insights you gained about the group and specific participants. Use these notes to help you be a better teacher in the future.

7. **Start preparing to lead the next group time.**
MEETING THE EXPLORE THE BIBLE
FAMILY OF ADULT RESOURCES

CORE RESOURCES

Use the Daily Discipleship Guide or Personal Study Guide & Leader Guide as the core resource for your group.

**Daily Discipleship Guide**
Resource for both the group members and the group leader. An alternative to the Personal Study Guide/Leader Guide model. Includes key words, commentary and questions for the group, daily Bible readings for personal study after the group time, and ideas for smaller groups to discuss the study. Leader helps with targeted teaching plans included in back.

**Personal Study Guide**
Resource for the group members to help them prepare for and study during the group time.

**Adult Leader Guide**
Resource for leaders of groups using the Personal Study Guide. Includes commentary and teaching plans.

**Additional Leader Helps**

**Adult Commentary**
Provides additional insight into the passages studied.

**QuickSource**
Resource for leaders, providing additional discussion questions, an object lesson, and dig deeper feature. Also provides a tool for an individual called on to step in to lead the group on short notice.

**Adult Leader Pack**
Resource filled with posters, masters for informative handouts, and a CD-ROM (includes DOC files of the Leader Guide commentary, group plans, the pack items in PDF format, and other helps for the leader).

**Biblical Illustrator**
Resource providing biblical backgrounds related to the session using articles, photos, and illustrations.

Find out more or order at LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible

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INTRODUCTION TO 1,2 TIMOTHY; TITUS

BACKGROUND
Young preachers share a special relationship with the mentors God places into their lives. I have been a “preacher boy” to two senior pastors who greatly influenced me. As a pastor and seminary professor, I’ve been blessed to mentor several men when they began their ministries. Years later, they still call me seeking guidance about various aspects of ministry. Such was the relationship between the apostle Paul with Timothy and Titus. Paul used the phrase “son in the faith” in his letters to each of them (1 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4).

As Paul traveled on his missionary journeys, Timothy and Titus helped him in several locations. Timothy served in Corinth (1 Cor. 4:17) and Macedonia (Acts 19:22) before staying in Ephesus at Paul’s instruction. Titus also traveled with Paul (Gal. 2:1; 2 Cor. 8:23) before being told to remain on the island of Crete. Timothy and Titus helped start several churches and worked with the congregations as they selected pastoral leaders and deacons. In First Timothy and Titus, Paul gave specific instructions about the qualifications for pastors and deacons, as well as guidance regarding various situations in the churches. Consequently, these three short letters are known as the pastoral epistles.

WRITER
All three letters are attributed to the apostle Paul, not only by internal evidence in the salutations but also according to references by the early church fathers. In First Timothy, Paul specifically told Timothy to remain in Ephesus while the apostle traveled to Macedonia. Paul wrote the second letter to Timothy from his final imprisonment in Rome, giving his son in the faith very personal instructions and encouragement.

Paul had been with Titus in Crete and left him there to minister to the churches. Luke wrote about Paul’s hazardous journey to Rome by way of Crete while in custody of a Roman centurion (Acts 27). However, this occasion would not have permitted time for Paul to work with believers there, much less to leave Titus in charge of the church. Most likely, Paul and Titus visited Crete following Paul’s release from his first imprisonment.

RECIPIENTS
Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles was personified in his relationships with Timothy and Titus. Timothy’s father was Greek (Gentile), while his mother was Jewish (Acts 16:1). Because the Jews knew Timothy’s father was Greek, Paul circumcised him. Although Paul referred to Timothy as his “son in the faith,” it is possible Paul did not lead Timothy to Christ. Luke notes they met this young disciple when Paul visited Lystra (Acts 16:1). However, some scholars believe Paul was instrumental in Timothy’s conversion during a previous visit to this area.

Paul also called Titus his “true son in our common faith” (Titus 1:4). In addition, Titus became an important helper in Paul’s ministry, joining him on his trip to Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1). Paul referred to Titus as his “partner and coworker” in the ministry to the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 8:23). While Paul circumcised Timothy because he was half Jewish, Titus was not circumcised because he was Greek (Gal. 2:3).
DATE

First Timothy and Titus share many similarities, causing some commentators to believe they were written about the same time. Some commentators claim Paul wrote 1 Timothy while he was in Macedonia, possibly in the vicinity of Philippi. However, in 1 Timothy 1:3 Paul used the phrase “when I went to Macedonia,” not “when I came to Macedonia.” The latter would have been more likely if he were writing from Macedonia. Therefore, the letter was written sometime after he left Macedonia. This theory is strengthened by Paul’s anticipation of rejoining Timothy in Ephesus (1 Tim. 4:13).

Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy while imprisoned in Rome. This occasion would have been the second time Paul had been imprisoned as Paul anticipated the end of his life (2 Tim. 4:6), placing this letter sometime prior to the death of Nero in 68 AD.

In between the two letters to Timothy, Paul wrote to Titus with instructions about the church in Crete. Since Paul mentions his intention to spend the winter at Nicopolis (Titus 3:12), this letter and First Timothy likely were written between 63 and 66 AD, possibly between Paul’s two imprisonments in Rome.

PURPOSE

We are familiar with First Timothy and Titus because of Paul’s instructions related to the qualifications of pastors and deacons. However, both letters primarily deal with correcting false doctrine that threatened the churches in Ephesus and Crete. Paul referred to the ongoing battle with heresies as “warfare,” and named opponents who resisted the faith (1 Tim. 1:18-20; 2 Tim. 1:15). Paul also advised his young preachers how they and the local believers should behave as positive examples of the faith (1 Tim. 3:15; Titus 2:15).

Second Timothy resounds with a more personal tone. Paul mentioned Timothy’s family and the legacy of faith the young preacher perpetuated. He was aware of Timothy’s tears, as both knew the end of Paul’s life was near. While Paul’s previous epistle focused more on pastoral and ecclesiastical issues, this letter concentrated more specifically on Timothy, including numerous admonitions regarding Timothy’s life, faith, and ministry. Too, Paul’s references to his personal struggles portray a man sharing deeply felt emotions with his son in the faith.

KEY THEMES

- **False doctrine versus true teaching**—In 1 Timothy and Titus, Paul addressed examples of heresies that plagued the churches. He contrasted false doctrines with the gospel he had preached.

- **Qualifications for church leaders**—Paul offered guidance for church leaders not only by listing qualifications for pastors and deacons, but also in specific instructions to Timothy and Titus.

- **Instructions for good behavior in the church**—From prayer to proper clothing, Paul delineated several aspects of behavior that believers should engage as witnesses for Christ.

- **Godliness and the gospel**—In 1 Timothy, Paul equated the mystery of godliness with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- **Final farewell**—Second Timothy relates Paul’s final appeal to his son in the ministry as Paul approached the end of his life and ministry.
OUTLINE OF 1,2 TIMOTHY; TITUS

1 Timothy

I. Greeting (1:1-2)
II. Charge to Timothy (1:3-20)
III. Proper Worship (2:1-15)
IV. Proper Church Leaders (3:1-13)
V. Proper Focus (3:14–4:16)
VI. Respecting Others (5:1–6:2)
VII. Conclusions (6:3-21)

2 Timothy

I. Greeting (1:1-7)
II. Always Faithful (1:8-18)
III. Strong in Grace (2:1-13)
IV. An Approved Worker (2:14-26)
V. Facing Persecution (3:1–4:8)
VI. Final Instructions (4:9-22)

Titus

I. Greeting (1:1-4)
II. Titus’s Ministry in Crete (1:5-16)
III. Sound Teaching (2:1-15)
IV. Importance of Good Works (3:1-11)
V. Conclusion (3:12-15)
ENTRUSTED
As recipients of God’s grace, believers are entrusted with the truth of the gospel message.

1 TIMOTHY 1:3-17
MEMORY VERSE: 1 TIMOTHY 1:15

Read 1 Timothy 1:1-20, First Thoughts (p. 14), and Understand the Context (p. 14). Affirm Pauline authorship of 1 Timothy. View the video introduction of 1,2 Timothy and Titus by Johnny Hunt at Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploretheBible or on the Leader Pack CD-ROM.


Plan the group time using ideas under Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 20–21). Tailor the plans for your group using More Ideas (p. 22) and ideas included online at Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploretheBible/Adults/LeaderExtras. Consider how you will use the difficult topics of false teaching, the law, and the universality of sin to point your group to the wonderful news of the gospel and God’s grace.

Grow from the weekly podcast on Ministry Grid (MinistryGrid.com/ExploreTheBible).

Gather the following items: □ Personal Study Guides; □ An item passed down from a family member or friend (p. 20), or a quiz of truth or tall tales for an alternate activity (p. 22); □ A whiteboard and a marker. Prepare to display the following Pack Item: □ PACK ITEM 5 (Poster: First-Century Heresies). Make copies of: □ PACK ITEM 8 (Handout: Memory Verse Bookmark); □ PACK ITEM 10 (Handout: Timothy: A Snapshot); □ PACK ITEM 12 (Handout: Paul’s Letters); and □ PACK ITEM 13 (Handout: First-Century Heresies).
**FIRST THOUGHTS**

Daniel Webster is regarded as one of the epic statesmen in American history. On one occasion he was asked about the most profound thought that ever occupied his mind. Webster solemnly replied, “My personal responsibility to God.” As followers of Christ we feel a solemn responsibility to honor His truth. We have been entrusted with the priceless treasure of the gospel. He has given us the sacred privilege of guarding, living, and sharing His truth.

(In PSG, p. 10) **What family recipes, stories, or traditions have been entrusted to you? How does knowing this information foster a greater sense of responsibility to other family members?**

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**UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT**

1 TIMOTHY 1:1-20

Although Timothy probably became a believer before meeting Paul, the two developed a strong tie (Acts 16:1-2). Paul called Timothy his “true son in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2). Timothy traveled with Paul and helped him in various ministries (Acts 17:14-15; 18:5; 20:4). As they passed through Ephesus, Paul instructed Timothy to remain with the church and help them while Paul traveled on to Macedonia.

Paul loved the church at Ephesus. During his missionary journeys, he frequently passed through the city where he experienced magnificent spiritual victories and significant spiritual opposition (Acts 19). Paul’s ministry among the Ephesian Christians produced a strong bond. They urged him to stay with them. While he initially declined (18:18-21), he later ministered among them for three years (20:31).

Having been left in charge of the Ephesian ministry, Timothy had the difficult task of correcting erroneous doctrine that was filtering into the church. Certain people had infected the congregation with false teaching that threatened the believers’ faith. These heretical teachers claimed to offer a better application of Jewish law even though they did not understand or apply the law properly (1 Tim. 1:6-7). Paul countered by reminding Timothy about the correct purpose of the law.

Paul encouraged Timothy to fulfill the potential he and others had observed. Timothy had the personal spiritual heritage (2 Tim. 1:5) and practical experience to lead the Ephesian church through the warfare for their faith. Some persons, like Hymenaeus and Alexander, had become shipwrecked in their faith. These two continued to cause much difficulty for Paul and the Ephesian church for many years (2 Tim. 2:14,17-18). However, Paul encouraged Timothy to stand strong on behalf of the true faith.
Accountability applies to everyone. In the opening verses of this epistle, Paul acknowledged he had been chosen and sent by God. He not only felt an obligation to be faithful, he also was grateful for God’s grace in saving him and calling him to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul also sensed responsibility for the churches he had helped start and those among whom he ministered.

The congregation in Ephesus loved Paul, and he returned their affection. Consequently, he told Timothy to remain in Ephesus while Paul went to Macedonia. Timothy enjoyed a special relationship with Paul as his “true son in the faith” (1:2) and traveled with the apostle frequently. For Paul to leave Timothy in Ephesus spoke to the importance he placed on this ministry. While Paul had to travel from Asia Minor to the region around Philippi, near Greece, he did not want to leave the church at the mercy of false teachers. Paul urged Timothy to stay with the Ephesian church so he could instruct certain people not to teach different doctrine. He did not identify these people at this point, although he named Hymenaeus and Alexander in verse 20.

Similarly, Paul did not specify which doctrine that was at stake, although other verses suggest it related to application of Jewish law (vv. 7-11). Likely, Paul was addressing the overall teaching he had given the Ephesian church. The terms urged (related to Paul’s entreaty of Timothy) and instruct (related to Timothy’s response to the false teachers) contain a sense of urgency. The matters at hand were important for the spiritual well being of the believers.

The false doctrines mentioned in verse 3 appear to involve different issues than the myths and endless genealogies listed in verse 4. Similar admonitions regarding Jewish fables and useless genealogies can be found in Paul’s letter to Titus (1:14; 3:9). Some scholars believe the issue of myths related to attempts to create a syncretistic approach to Christianity, blending Jewish fables and pagan myths with the gospel.

Myths stood in opposition to Paul’s emphasis on God’s plan, which referred to the gospel of Christ. A myth is by nature fictional, while God’s plan is absolutely true. Similarly, endless genealogies may have included the Jewish penchant for basing religious value on the ability to trace one’s heritage back through many generations.

Neither myths nor endless genealogies were edifying for believers, but instead tended to promote empty speculations. This phrase addresses useless controversies that are worthless and contrary to sound doctrine. These abstract disputes might have appealed to people who loved philosophical gymnastics, but they had no value compared to God’s plan—the gospel—which does not rely on rhetorical argumentation but operates on faith.
MAJOR THEMES IN 1 TIMOTHY

- **Sound teaching**—Paul expressed his concern for sound teaching (1:3-11; 4:13; 6:3-5).
- **Church leadership**—Paul set forth qualifications for pastors and deacons (3:1-13); he also gave specific instructions to Timothy (4:11-16).
- **Conduct in the church**—Paul wanted Timothy to know how people should conduct themselves in the household of God (3:14-15). He gave specific instructions concerning prayer (2:1-7), orderliness in worship (2:8-15), caring for widows (5:3-16), and honoring elders (5:17-22).

VERSE 5

While the content of Timothy’s teaching was the gospel, the goal of this instruction should be love. This not only meant that Timothy should teach in a loving manner, but that the result of the instruction would be love. Paul certainly wanted the people to love one another, but the emphasis was for Timothy’s teaching to produce the kind of love attributed to God alone.

Obviously, God is the ultimate source of agape love. On the human side of this equation were three qualities that demonstrated the kind of person who can love with godly love. Godly love is expressed by someone with a pure heart. The word heart represented the emotional and the cognitive aspects of a human being. The idea of a pure heart involved a purified affection and cleansed intentions.

Godly love also proceeds from a good conscience. This concept does not infer sinless perfection but the commitment to right behavior. Coupled with these two qualities is a sincere faith. Sincere was distinguished from useless fables and genealogies (v. 4).

VERSE 6-7

Some have departed from these and turned aside to fruitless discussion. They want to be teachers of the law, although they don’t understand what they are saying or what they are insisting on.

VERSES 6-7

Good Bible interpretation requires proper understanding of pronouns. Often, theological confusion results from misreading which noun is being represented by a pronoun. In this verse, Paul used two pronouns to make an important point. The word some could refer to the certain people in verse 3 or to Hymenaeus and Alexander in verse 20. More likely, Paul was addressing church members who had been led astray by the false teaching.

The second pronoun, these, refers back to the three character qualities mentioned in verse 5 and the godly love they produce. Paul mourned the fact that some of the Ephesian believers had departed from these and, instead, turned aside to fruitless discussion.

Verse 7 refers back to the people described in verse 6 by the pronoun some. The people who had left the sound doctrine of Christ wanted to be teachers of the law. The term law meant the Jewish law of the Torah and the Talmud. They had fallen into the trap of desiring position and prestige by exerting theological authority. However, they did not understand what they were saying or what they were insisting on. The latter phrase is reminiscent of Jesus’ condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees who
demanded that people follow all of their teachings but refused to do the same in their personal lives (Matt. 23:1-7).

In churches today, teachers and preachers are accountable to the church and to God. James warned against seeking the role of teacher lightly since those who guide others are held to a higher standard (Jas. 3:1). Neither passage suggests being a teacher of the Word is a bad occupation, but rather that preachers and teachers must be faithful to proclaim sound doctrine in the love of Christ.

How can believers ensure that their teachers are sharing sound doctrine that is biblically accurate?

IN LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL (1 TIM. 1:8-11)

VERSES 8-11
Paul’s rejection of false teachers of the law did not mean he rejected God’s law. He and Timothy knew the law was good. The term we includes Paul and Timothy, although it certainly included the church in its larger context. Paul’s point dealt with the need to use the law legitimately, especially in light of the gospel. Timothy was to resist false doctrine by teaching a proper understanding and application of God’s Word.

Paul used the word know twice in verses 8-9 to affirm Timothy’s understanding of the right application of the law, as opposed to the lack of understanding by the false teachers (v. 6). The apostle believed the law was like a schoolmaster, teaching people the difference between right and wrong according to God’s standards. (See Gal. 3:24-25.) As such, a righteous person is not dependent on the law because by nature a believer has the imputed righteousness of Christ.

(In PSG, p. 14) How does the law point to our need for a Savior? How does Jesus provide what the law could not?

Paul contrasted a righteous person with others who lived contrary to God’s law. He proceeded to list the types of persons whose sins are condemned by the law. This accounting was not meant to be exhaustive, but offered examples of unrighteous persons who need the law’s correction.

The use of various pairings combines similar ideas for emphasis, much like Hebrew parallelism. The lawless are people who lived outside the law. This group is similar to the rebellious who did not see themselves as subject
to the law. The second pairing includes the **ungodly**, meaning people who do not show reverence for God, and the **sinful**, denoting persons who disregard God’s standards.

The third grouping links the **ungodly** and the **irreverent**. The word *ungodly* describes profane individuals, while *irreverent* associates being profane with worldliness and a rejection of the divine.

Although separated into two items, the connection is obvious between persons who **kill their fathers and mothers** and **murderers** in general. Both descriptors demonstrate the vile nature of each group.

Verse 10 continues the list of perversion. Paul linked the **sexually immoral and homosexuals**. He saw persons who committed heterosexual immoralities and those who were homosexual as being equally sinful. Both types of immorality were condemned.

Breaking from his pattern of coupling pairs of sins, Paul concluded by mentioning **slave traders, liars, and perjurers** specifically. The sins of lying and perjury could be linked since both involve telling untruths, one in relationships and the other in legal circumstances. Paul’s condemnation of slave traders provides strong evidence against persons who claim Paul supported the practice of slavery in some of his teachings on submission to authority (1 Tim. 6:2; Titus 2:9).

Verses 9 through 11 comprise a single sentence and should be studied as a unit of thought in context with the rest of the passage. Verse 10 concludes Paul’s listing of sinful types of people with the broad inclusion of whatever else is contrary to sound teaching. Paul then defined sound teaching as that which **conforms to the gospel**. Whatever is contrary to that gospel is **contrary to the sound teaching**.

**IN RESPONSE TO HIS GRACE** (1 TIM. 1:12-17)

**VERSES 12-14**

Paul reflected on the difference the gospel made in his life, being reminded of his own sin and God’s grace. Having instructed Timothy to stand firmly against false teachers, Paul quickly acknowledged his personal need of God’s grace. God’s merciful acts caused Paul to **give thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord**.

Paul was not bragging on his abilities or his good works as reasons for Christ’s appointing him to the ministry. He acknowledged God’s gracious purpose in calling him into this ministry of the gospel. Even when he linked his commission to the fact God considered him **faithful**, it was all because of God’s **grace**. Paul’s statement in verse 12 must be read along with the rest of the sentence in verses 13 and 14.

**God’s grace is not merely sufficient, it continually increases more abundantly.**

Paul was completely aware of his past sin. He had been a **blasphemer**, speaking against Jesus. He also was a **persecutor**, actively oppressing people who followed Jesus. In spite of Paul’s past character and behavior, he **received mercy** from God.
When Paul contemplated God’s mercy toward him, he was overwhelmed by the way His grace overflowed. God’s grace is not merely sufficient, it continually increases more abundantly. Paul was overwhelmed that even as sin increased, God’s grace abounded even more. (See Rom. 5:20.)

**VERSES 15-17**

The saying to which Paul referred may have been a faith declaration common to the church of his era. In any case it certainly referenced Jesus’ declaration that He came to save the lost (Luke 5:32). Such a statement was trustworthy. Timothy and the church at Ephesus could place complete faith in Jesus’ redemptive purpose. This proclamation was deserving of full acceptance. The message of God’s grace in Christ should be embraced completely and without reservation.

Paul confessed he was the worst of sinners. His previous listing of grievous sinners (vv. 9-10) was not an arrogant accusation but a humble admission of his awareness that he was their chief.

Paul’s self-awareness of being the worst of sinners magnified God’s mercy. If Christ could demonstrate His extraordinary patience toward someone like Paul, He could extend grace to anyone. Paul saw his salvation as an example so others might believe in Christ and receive eternal life. God’s grace abounds to all people who place their faith in Jesus.

Paul concluded this section with a benedictory salute to God who had extended such undeserved grace. Exalting the characteristics of the Lord, Paul glorified Him as the King. He is the eternal King, existing in time past and in time to come. He is the immortal King, living forever. He is the invisible King, observable not by human senses but revealed through His Son. He is the only God, unlike and unaccompanied by any other. He is the King who deserves honor and glory forever and ever. To which we can shout with Paul, Amen.

**Believers are an exhibit of God’s grace and mercy for all to see.**

Like Paul, believers are an exhibit of God’s grace and mercy for all to see. We cannot look down on other people as if their sins are somehow worse than ours. We cannot see ourselves as deserving of God’s salvation. We can only confess our sinful unworthiness and receive God’s grace by faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. As we do so, we join Paul in praising Him for His mercy and grace.

**How does our awareness of sin cause us to glorify the Lord for His grace?**
LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

WELCOME: As the group settles in, share something that has been passed down to you from a family member or friend (e.g. recipe, tradition, photo). If you brought an actual item, show it or pass it around now. Share why this is important to you.

ASK: What family recipes, stories, or traditions have been entrusted to you? How does knowing this information foster a greater sense of responsibility to other family members? (PSG, p. 10)

CONTEXTUALIZE: Distribute copies of Pack Item 10 (Handout: Timothy: A Snapshot) and Pack Item 12 (Handout: Paul’s Letters). Using these handouts and Understand the Context (p. 14; PSG, p. 11), introduce 1 Timothy. Describe Paul and Timothy’s relationship. Affirm Paul as the author of this epistle. Briefly review Paul’s many biblical letters. Describe the culture of Ephesus, highlighting the pagan idolatry, sexual immorality, and greed surrounding the temple of Artemis, which is known as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

EMPHASIZE: Explain that Paul called Timothy to be strong and courageous in proclaiming the truth of the gospel in his cultural setting.

TRANSITION: We, as believers, have been entrusted with the gospel. Having received God’s grace, we’re called to share the truth of the gospel faithfully with others.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Direct someone to read 1 Timothy 1:3-7, while the group listens for how Paul described the speech of false teachers.

ASK: Why was Paul so concerned about what the false teachers were saying?

EXAMINE: Refer to Pack Item 5 (Poster: First-Century Heresies) and Pack Item 13 (Handout: First-Century Heresies). Say: Paul was concerned about more than minor theological differences. False teaching and speculations were pulling people away from God’s work.

ILLUSTRATE: On a board or poster, make two columns: “True Gospel Teaching” and “False Teaching.” Direct the group to list characteristics of each type of teaching, based on 1 Timothy 1:3-7.

CONNECT: Call for a volunteer to read Acts 20:29-30. Guide the group to consider how this information would impact their understanding of true gospel teaching.

DISCUSS: Encourage the group to discuss the questions on PSG page 13: What responsibility does a teacher have to the people he or she teaches? What responsibility does the person being taught have to the one teaching?

READ: As a volunteer reads 1 Timothy 1:8-11, instruct the group to consider the purpose of the law.

ASK: How does the law point to our need for a Savior? How does Jesus provide what the law could not? (PSG, p. 14). Allow for discussion and guide the group to consider the reasons for the law listed under Verses 8-11 in the PSG on page 14.
EXPLORE: Direct the group to the Key Doctrine found on PSG page 15. Ask a volunteer to read the key doctrine and another volunteer to read the corresponding verses (1 Cor. 15:21-22). How would you restate or explain this doctrine in one or two sentences? How does this doctrine impact your understanding of 1 Timothy 1:8-11?

READ: Invite someone to read 1 Timothy 1:12-17. As the text is read, guide the group to consider what they can learn about Christ from these verses.

SHARE: Call for the group to list attributes and characteristics of Jesus Christ revealed through these verses. Record them on a board or poster with the title “Attributes of Christ,” along with the verse number for each reference (e.g. “Source of strength,” v. 12). Refer to the PSG under Verses 12-14 (pp. 15–16) if needed.

DESCRIBE: Provide a brief introduction to Paul’s background, focusing specifically on his life prior to his conversion. Refer to Acts 8:3 and 22:4. Summarize Paul’s conversion. Refer the group to Acts 9 if they would like to read more about Paul’s conversion on their own this week.

DISCUSS: How did Paul’s past influence his understanding of the gospel? What role did mercy play in Paul’s salvation? What about grace? Lead the group to discuss the difference between mercy and grace. Direct the group to underline the definitions of mercy and grace given on PSG page 16 under Verses 12-14. Call for responses to what mercy and grace mean to individuals in the group.

DEBATE: Ask whether the group agrees or disagrees with the following statement: It is integral to your testimony as a believer to be open about your past struggles. Consider if this applies to all past struggles and whether this should be shared with other believers, non-believers, or both. Why or why not? Is there support for that answer in verses 12-17?

READ: Invite a volunteer to read verse 15. Why is this considered a non-negotiable truth? What are some other non-negotiable truths of the gospel? Remind the group that salvation is found only through faith in Jesus.

ASK: What are indicators that a person truly recognizes their depravity and sinful state? From the PSG (p. 17): How did Paul’s life become an exhibit of God’s grace and mercy?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

REVIEW: Invite volunteers to choose one of the summary statements under In My Context in the PSG (p. 18) and elaborate on what they learned about this idea.

RESPOND: Guide the group through the first question set under In Your Context in the PSG (p. 18): With your group, discuss ways of holding each other accountable for remaining focused on the gospel. Identify actions the group can take as a whole to safeguard against being distracted by controversies and pointless debates.

CHALLENGE: Give out copies of Pack Item 8 (Handout: Memory Verse Bookmark). Invite the group to read this week’s memory verse aloud together (1 Timothy 1:15).

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God for His mercy and grace and asking Him to continue to increase our understanding of the depth of His love for us.
PRACTICE

• Memorize 1 Timothy 1:15. As you consider this verse, ask God to reveal any blind spots you have to your own sin. Confess and repent.

• Read 1 Timothy 1:5. Prayerfully consider how your motives as a leader line up with those presented in this verse. Ask God for help in fulfilling the good purposes He has for you in this area.

• Enlist volunteers to write notes of affirmation to teachers and leaders in your church.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)
To replace the Focus Attention activity (p. 20), play a round of “truth or tall tale.” Present both myths and weird but true facts, allowing the group to guess if each is the truth or a tall tale. Ask: What methods or tools can help us distinguish truth from untruth? Explain that in this session we’ll discuss the truth of the gospel and the importance of guarding it from distortion.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

• To enhance the discussion on teachers in 1 Timothy 1:3-7, analyze biblical passages on teachers and false teachers. Invite volunteers to read Matthew 7:15-20 and James 3:1. Discuss ways to identify false teachers and also how to recognize and encourage teachers of truth.

• Lead the group to examine the list of sins found in 1 Timothy 1:9-10. Ask: Why might Paul have taken the time to list specific sins? Compare this list to the Ten Commandments. Discuss whether you agree or disagree with the parallels drawn between the two lists in the PSG (p. 14).

• To emphasize the universal need for God’s mercy and grace, instruct the group to turn to the person beside them and take turns reading 1 Timothy 1:15. As a group, discuss whether the gospel is exclusive or inclusive. Call for responses to the PSG questions on page 16: How does a person’s past serve as a means for God to demonstrate His mercy and grace? How does a person’s past become a source of gratitude for salvation?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)
Direct the group to complete the third activity under In My Context in the PSG (p. 18): Review the information on the inside front cover. Identify one person with whom you can share the gospel. What steps will you take to share with the person you identified (include dates in your steps)? Invite volunteers to pray over each name identified.

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA
A deep understanding of our own sin leads to a greater appreciation of God’s grace and mercy. Sing or read the lyrics to the hymn, “Amazing Grace! How Sweet the Sound,” by John Newton.
Believers are to be mindful of how they represent God in this world.

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-15
MEMORY VERSE: 1 TIMOTHY 2:1

READ 1 Timothy 2:1-15, First Thoughts (p. 24), and Understand the Context (p. 24) to gain more insight into the culture of Ephesus at the time of this letter.

STUDY 1 Timothy 2:1-15, using Explore the Text (pp. 25–29). Review PACK ITEM 2 (Outlines of 1,2 Timothy; Titus) for an overview of 1 Timothy. Familiarize yourself with PACK ITEM 3 (Poster: Metaphors in Paul’s Letters), focusing on the metaphor of Jesus as our mediator. Read an article on “gender equality” in a trusted Bible dictionary.

PLAN the group time using ideas under Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 30–31), More Ideas (p. 32), and ideas included in QuickSource. Consider how you will emphasize the importance of men leading the way in the church while affirming the role women play in reaching others with the gospel.

GROW with other group leaders at the Groups Ministry blog (LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry).

GATHER the following items: □ Personal Study Guides. Prepare to display the following Pack Items: □ PACK ITEM 1 (Map: The World of Paul, Timothy, and Titus); □ PACK ITEM 2 (Outlines of 1,2 Timothy; Titus); and □ PACK ITEM 3 (Poster: Metaphors in Paul’s Letters). If using the Summarize and Challenge exercise listed under More Ideas (p. 32), obtain: □ A whiteboard and a marker.
FIRST THOUGHTS

Everywhere we go, someone is watching us. A family member, a child, a friend, a co-worker—someone is watching. This watching is not being done in some weird way, but done to see how we do things especially if we claim to be Christians. Not only are our actions being watched, but also our attitudes and motives. People want to know if the Christian life is real so they watch. Jesus gives us an opportunity to influence others for Him by representing Him in this world.

(In PSG, p. 19) When have you become aware that someone was watching you? How did that awareness change your behavior?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-15

Sandwiched between his warning about resisting false teachers and instructions for qualifications for pastors and deacons, Paul urged Timothy to lead the Ephesian believers to develop lifestyles that would impact their community for Christ. Living on mission with the gospel was not limited to missionary journeys like those Paul had undertaken. Timothy was well acquainted with the opportunities and opposition experienced when traveling with Paul on evangelistic and church planting endeavors. However, as a pastor, Timothy had a different task: to equip the believers to be on mission in their spheres of influence.

Located in the Roman province of Asia, on the western side of modern day Turkey, Ephesus was a cosmopolitan city situated as a crossroads between three major trading regions. While the Roman Empire ruled the known world at this time, various regional rulers also affected the people of Ephesus. Paul urged Timothy to lead the believers to pray for these authorities, as well as for other persons they encountered. Both men knew that prayer was foundational to every other aspect of ministry. Only the power of God could break through the barriers to the gospel.

The remainder of Paul’s instructions directed both men and women about ways they could influence their society for Christ. From prayer and worship to the way they dressed and behaved, Ephesian believers had opportunities for witnessing to people in the pagan culture of their city. Ephesus was known for its famous temple to Diana, also known as Artemis. Much of the Ephesian economy was built around this place of false worship. Paul encountered serious opposition from merchants whose businesses were related to the temple (Acts 19). The Christian community lacked the power or position to change the culture through political or economic
pressure. Paul knew their greatest source of influence was prayer and godly lifestyles.

Paul knew that God wanted all people be saved through faith in Jesus Christ. The church was God’s instrument for spreading the gospel. The believers’ prayers were powerful as they interceded for the people of Ephesus—from the authorities to the average citizen. Their consistent lifestyles and faithful worship authenticated the faith they proclaimed. By any and all means, the Christians were on mission to Ephesus and beyond.

**EXPLORE THE TEXT**

**THROUGH PRAYER (1 TIM. 2:1-7)**

**VERSES 1-2**

Paul called on Timothy to lead the church to pray for the salvation of all people. The phrase *first of all, then,* relates what he was about to say with his previous comments in the first chapter. Because the church faced opposition from false teachers in the church and false worship in the culture, the believers needed to take action. Paul’s use of the term *urge* emphasized what he was saying was crucial.

Reaching Ephesus required a spiritual approach totally dependent on the Lord. Paul urged the believers to take four actions designed to bring the power of God to bear on the populace. Christians were to offer petitions, prayers of supplication, as they asked God to act. Petitions certainly were prayers, but the term *prayers* encompassed all types of requests being made to God. Another kind of prayer involved intercessions, a word that suggests coming before an authority on behalf of someone else. Paul also encouraged the Ephesian Christians to offer thanksgivings, not merely for God’s blessings, but for God’s involvement with the people for whom they are praying.

The object of these four actions was not limited to any group of people but was to be for everyone. While Paul specifically identified authorities in verse 2, he wanted the believers to pray for all kinds of persons. No one was excluded from their gospel mission.

While the believers prayed for everyone, they especially needed to pray for kings and all those who are in authority. The general inclusion of all those who are in authority meant persons who exercised power at every level of government. The basic principle could also be applied to religious authorities and leaders in business.

The purpose of their prayers was the effect it might have on the believers and their community. However good or evil the authorities might be, they could influence whether the people were able to enjoy tranquil and quiet lives. Notice the phrase *so that we may lead.* Believers should pray for persons in authority for the benefit of all who seek a tranquil and quiet life. We do not have to agree with their policies or politics any more than the early Christians endorsed their secular rulers. As we pray for authorities, God will work in their lives for the benefit of His people and the accomplishment of His purpose.

VERSES 3-4

3 This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

4 Perhaps anticipating objections by Christians who were suffering under oppressive rulers, Paul added that this (meaning such prayers) is good. Jesus instructed His followers to pray for those who misused and persecuted them because doing so was consistent with their heavenly Father (Matt. 5:44-45). Praying for other people, even rulers, pleases God.

Paul normally referred to God as Father and Jesus as Savior. In this context, he referred to God as our Savior. By calling God our Savior, Paul had in mind God’s intention and provision for salvation in the following verses.

Paul asserted that as our Savior, God wants everyone to be saved. His statement is consistent with Peter’s encouragement that God is not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). Both passages address God’s will. Neither says that all people will be saved, but that God’s desire is for them to be saved.

The second phrase, to come to the knowledge of the truth, was a continuation of what it means to be saved. The word knowledge involves more than understanding the facts of the gospel; it includes a full comprehension and appropriation of the truth—the good news of Jesus. This prayer focus reflects God’s desire for all people to be saved through faith in Jesus.

VERSES 5-7

5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, a testimony at the proper time. For this I was appointed a herald, an apostle (I am telling the truth; I am not lying), and a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

6 Not only does God desire that people be saved, He provided the means by which we are saved. Paul began with the basic statement of faith common to Jews and Christians: there is one God. (See Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29.) The syntax of verse 5 equates the doctrine of one God with that of one mediator. In the Jewish sacrificial system, priests fulfilled the role of mediators. Paul proclaimed there is only one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus. Paul’s emphasis on Jesus’ being a man did not diminish the reality of His divinity. The apostle declared the dual truths of Jesus’ humanity and deity. To acknowledge Jesus as the Christ was the same as pronouncing Him to be divine. God was the Savior by giving His Son, Jesus, to mediate reconciliation between Himself and humanity.

7 Jesus secured our salvation when He gave himself as a ransom for all. The concept of salvation as a ransom echoes throughout the Old Testament. (See Isa. 35:10; Jer. 31:11; Hos. 13:14.) Jesus identified His primary mission as giving His life as a ransom for many. (See Matt. 20:28.)

As he thought about the gospel message he had been proclaiming, Paul used three terms to describe his role. He was a herald, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. A herald was someone who proclaimed the message of the person who sent him. The gospel Paul preached was not his message but God’s.

Similarly, the literal meaning of apostle is one who is sent out on a mission. While Paul was not one of the Twelve, God had chosen him to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Because some people had questioned his authority, Paul reiterated twice that he was telling the truth and was not lying.

Finally, Paul was a teacher of the Gentiles. Although he often preached in synagogues earlier in his ministry, Paul’s primary ministry was to the non-Jewish people. Likely all three terms—herald, apostle, and teacher—
related to his ministry to the Gentiles. His message, mission, and ministry found fulfillment in bringing God’s good news of salvation through Jesus to the nations. Paul affirmed that he had not sought these roles but was appointed by God. Thus, the source of his authority was not man, nor a council of men, but of God.

**Believers are called to pray with a special focus on the lost.**

Because salvation comes only through faith in Jesus, believers are called to pray with a special focus on the lost. Being on mission as heralds of God’s good news, our prayers demonstrate our dependence on Him to open people’s hearts to Christ.

*Why is prayer so vital in carrying out the mission God has given us?*

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**LED BY GODLY MEN** *(1 TIM. 2:8)*

**VERSE 8**

This verse and the verses regarding women complement the previous section on prayer and salvation. Paul called on believers to set the example through prayer with love and unity. Specifically, he wanted the men to lead the church to be on mission for Christ by praying.

Paul previously emphasized the broad reach of prayer and salvation (vv. 1,4). Believers were to pray for everyone, and God desired everyone to be saved. He continued that refrain in verse 8, calling on *men in every place to pray.* Wherever the church gathered, the men were to pray, applying the four aspects of prayer mentioned in verse 1.

While Paul’s admonition mentions *lifting up holy hands,* his comment should not be taken as advocacy for a particular posture of prayer. The lifting of hands was secondary to the other aspects of Paul’s statement. First, prayer involves communication with a holy God; therefore, the person praying should have *holy hands.* This phrase is a metaphor for the believer’s spiritual condition. If we would come into the presence of the Almighty, we should have clean hands and a pure heart. (See Ps. 24:3-4.)

Second, the manner of prayer should be *without anger or argument.* Paul had already noted the disruptive presence of false teachers in Ephesus in chapter 1. The believers should not allow these disputes to detract from their prayers on behalf of all people.

*How can godly men in your church lead the way in praying for all people?*
SUPPORTED BY GODLY WOMEN (1 TIM. 2:9-15)

VERSES 9-10
A church on mission needs every member to participate. Paul’s directions to women in the Ephesian church would help them serve their church by promoting the gospel of Christ. Beginning this section with the word also, Paul linked what he had previously said to men with what he was about to say regarding women. As the men served the church through prayer and holy living, even so the women (a possible reference to the men’s wives) supported this servant leadership. While verse 9 focuses on the women’s appearance, it must be read in the context of verse 10. Paul was contrasting the habits of pagan women in Ephesian society with Christian women whose good works and worship of God demonstrated godliness.

Paul was contrasting the habits of pagan women in Ephesian society with Christian women.

Because the society took particular notice to women’s appearance, he encouraged them to be mindful of their dress and actions, especially when gathered for worship. Women with financial means used outward elegance to promote themselves. Elaborate hairstyles, jewelry made with gold and pearls, and expensive apparel demonstrated materialistic values common among the pagan citizens of Ephesus. Contrasted with this lifestyle were the Christian women who wore modest clothing and were known for their decency and good sense. The word translated decency carries the connotation of modesty toward people and reverence toward God. The word for good sense emphasizes the person’s self-control and sound mind. Godly women maintained honorable reputations that glorified the Lord.

VERSES 11-14
Moving from the public appearance and reputation of godly women, Paul took the opportunity to instruct Timothy in how such women should act within the church. Verse 11 emphasizes the need for believers to learn. The idea conveyed by this term describes someone who receives instruction.

As someone in a position of being taught God’s Word, the women would best do so quietly with full submission. The idea of submission could imply husbands, but in this context of instruction in the church, it could refer to the biblical teacher in the church, possibly the pastor.

Assuming verse 11 refers to instruction by the pastor, verse 12 would follow that idea. Paul’s restriction that a woman should not teach or have authority over a man could include that she should not serve in the role of pastor. This interpretation would be consistent with Paul’s other statements in chapter 3 and in Titus regarding the qualifications for pastors.

Paul’s injunction for the woman to remain quiet does not mean that a woman cannot speak or pray in church. Instead, it infers that she should defer to the pastor and to her husband in matters of biblical teaching and authority. Some scholars see a reference to maintaining a quiet attitude as opposed to a quarrelsome spirit.
Offering support for his position, Paul noted that *Adam was formed first*. The word *formed* emphasizes God’s initiation and operation in creating all things, including human beings. By adding *then Eve*, Paul not only reiterated the order of human creation, but also noted that Eve, like Adam, was created by God in His image (Gen. 1:26-27).

Paul pointed out that *the woman was deceived*, unlike her husband *Adam*. This text should not be understood to minimize Adam’s responsibility in the original sin. Elsewhere, Paul referred several times to the way sin came into the world “through one man”—meaning Adam (Rom. 5:12-19). In this immediate context, Paul noted the fact that Eve transgressed. She was culpable in disobeying God’s instructions.

None of these restrictions suggest that one gender should be considered superior to the other. Both men and women have roles in the church; they are just different, focusing the strengths of each gender into the mission of the church in its culture.

**VERSE 15**

Paul’s final statement can confuse the casual reader. He appears to suggest salvation for women comes **through childbearing**. Keeping in mind that all Scriptures are consistent, this interpretation would be in conflict with countless passages dealing with salvation through Christ alone. Also, the first part of the statement links with lifestyles of faith, love, holiness, and good sense.

Keeping the larger context in mind, while Paul had just given some restrictive guidance to the women in the church, he quickly affirmed the positive nature of female believers. Their roles, particularly as mothers, were invaluable both to the church and the family. As such, they needed to maintain consistent qualities. The *faith* of godly women has led many children to trust and love Christ. A woman’s *love* for her husband and children binds families together in caring nurture. A woman’s *holiness* models the kind of lifestyle that honors the Lord. The term *good sense* harkens back to verse 9 in calling women to live with moderation and self-control.

Godly women are mindful of how they impact the witness of the church. As men and women carry out the mission of Christ’s church, each fulfills unique and important roles. Together, in prayer, they are co-laborers with Christ in His gospel mission to the world.

*How have you been influenced positively by godly women in your life?*
LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

READ: Direct the group to the following sentences in the paragraph on page 19 of the PSG:
Not only are our actions being watched but so are our attitudes and motives. People want to know if our Christian lives are real, so they watch.

ASK: In what ways are Christians watched or judged differently than non-Christians? Why?

EXPLAIN: In 1 Timothy 2, Paul gives instructions regarding how Christians are to represent God in this world.

REVIEW: Ask the group to summarize what they learned about the city of Ephesus in their study during the last week. Use Pack Item 1 (Map: The World of Paul, Timothy, and Titus) to point out the location of Ephesus. Using Understand the Context (pp. 24–25; PSG p. 20) to highlight additional information about Ephesus, specifically the temple of Diana, that sets the stage for Paul’s letter.

TRANSITION: Explain that this setting in Ephesus intensified the need for set-apart godly examples in the church. Note on Pack Item 2 (Outlines of 1,2 Timothy; Titus) that this session shifts to a focus on proper worship.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Direct the group to pay attention to what Paul wrote about prayer as a volunteer reads 1 Timothy 2:1-7.

ASK: What do these verses teach us about the content of prayer?

EXAMINE: Explore the differences between “petitions,” “prayers,” “intercessions,” and “thanksgivings.” Instruct someone to look up definitions for each word on his or her smartphone and another person to read the definitions in the PSG under Verses 1-2 (p. 21).

DISCUSS: How are these various aspects of prayer related to one another? What do these verses reveal about the role of Jesus in our prayer lives?

ILLUSTRATE: Display Pack Item 3 (Poster: Metaphors in Paul’s Letters). Invite the group to compare and contrast Jesus’ role as our mediator and the role of a legal mediator. Consider the differences between the groups needing mediation: Jesus as mediator is providing a connection between the perfect God and flawed man, whereas a legal mediator works to resolve a connection between two flawed and sinful humans.

DISCUSS: How should the gospel’s offer to all people impact how we pray? (PSG, p. 22)

READ: Invite someone to read 1 Timothy 2:8. Explain that in this verse, the word used for “men” refers specifically to males.
DEBATE: Encourage the group to underline this statement in the first paragraph of the PSG for this section (p. 23): Our passion for Christ can be gauged by our commitment to His mission. Our commitment to His mission can be measured by our faithfulness in prayer. Invite the group to discuss their level of agreement or disagreement with these statements and share why.

ASK: How can anger influence a person’s prayer requests? How does anger get in the way of prayer? (PSG p. 23)

DISCUSS: Direct the group to the following sentence in the second paragraph of the PSG for this section (p. 23): The phrase “lifting up holy hands” referred more to purity of the heart than to posture of the body. Ask: What signifies a pure heart?

READ: As a volunteer reads 1 Timothy 2:9-15, encourage the group to consider if these directives given are specific to Christian women as opposed to all women.

EVALUATE: Invite the group to list some of the directions given to women in these verses. Ask: What did Paul seem most concerned with? How does the historical background of Ephesus impact your understanding of these directions?

HYPOTHEZIZE: Call for the group to discuss which of these commands might have been most radical to Paul’s original audience and why. Then consider which of these commands are the most radical today.

READ: Direct a volunteer to read Proverbs 3:5-7. Assert that there may be Bible passages that seem counterintuitive to what the world believes, but we can trust in the goodness of God’s Word.

DISCUSS: Affirm that men and women were created equally in the image of God. Ask: How has God uniquely equipped women to fulfill His gospel mission? How about men?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

REVIEW: Direct the group to the three bulleted summary statements under In My Context (PSG, p. 27). Call on the group to discuss how each of these statements pertain to a missional mind-set. Lead them to reflect on how the discussion has influenced how they previously felt about living on mission.

RESPOND: Guide the group through the first question set under In My Context in the PSG (p. 27): As a group, discuss ways of being more intentional in praying for the salvation of others. In what ways can your group consistently pray for the lost in your community?

CHALLENGE: Invite the group to share ways they can be more effective missionally in light of today’s study. Call on a volunteer to read 1 Timothy 2:1-2 again. Encourage the group to pray for those in authority this week. Ask: How can prayer impact our responses toward current events?

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God for the opportunity to represent Him in the world and participate in His good work.
PRACTICE

- Consider the third question set under In My Context in the PSG (p. 27), specifically as it pertains to your role as a group leader: **Take time to pray, asking God to reveal any actions of yours that might get in the way of sharing the gospel. Commit to make changes as He reveals to you those actions. Record any actions you plan on taking as a result of what God reveals to you.**
- Recruit leaders from the group to implement the suggestions made regarding ways to consistently pray for the lost in your community.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)
As your group begins, ask: **Who are some of the most famous people alive right now?** Discuss how many of the most famous people go to great lengths to maintain privacy and avoid being watched all the time. Ask the following from the PSG (p. 19): **When have you become aware that someone was watching you? How did that awareness change your behavior?**

EXPLORE THE TEXT

- To enhance discussion of 1 Timothy 2:1, direct the group to each write last week’s memory verse (1 Timothy 1:15) at the top of a piece of paper and this week’s memory verse (1 Timothy 2:1) at the bottom of the paper. Encourage the group to use the middle of the paper to sketch, write, or notate the relationship between these two verses.
- For further study of 1 Timothy 2:9-15, lead the group through the Bible Skill activity in the PSG (p. 26): **Using a concordance, find other passages dealing with the different roles each gender has in church life and ministry. Review an article on “gender equality” in a Bible dictionary. Write a description of the roles men and women have in fulfilling the church’s mission. What are some similarities? What are some differences? Why is prayer so important for both men and women in fulfilling Christ’s commission?**
- Use the following to discuss how Jesus modeled leadership and submission. Invite volunteers to read John 13:1-17. Guide the group in considering ways that Jesus led, taught, and exercised authority but also modeled submission and servanthood. Refer to Philippians 2:5-11.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)
As a group, list three or four current events that threaten tranquility and peace. Call on someone to read 1 Timothy 2:1-2. Encourage the group to identify a leader, authority figure, or group of leaders to pray for with regard to each situation. Pray through this list now or encourage the group to pray for these throughout the week.

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA
Believers are to be mindful of how they represent God in this world. Ask God to continue His sanctifying work as you listen to “Refiner's Fire,” by Brian Doerksen.
SESSION 3

Setting the Example

Godly leaders are needed to lead healthy churches.

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

MEMORY VERSE: 1 TIMOTHY 3:13

READ 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9, First Thoughts (p. 34), and Understand the Context (p. 34). Compare the passages for additional insight into qualifications for church leadership as outlined by Paul.

STUDY 1 Timothy 3:1-13, using Explore the Text (pp. 35–39). Familiarize yourself with PACK ITEM 9 (Handout: Models of Church Structure), focusing on the roles of elders and deacons. Review PACK ITEM 4 (Poster: 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9). Using a trusted Bible commentary, research the various interpretations of 1 Timothy 3:2: “the husband of one wife.”

PLAN the group time, looking for ways to incorporate the Suggested Music Idea (p. 42) in the session. Use the ideas under Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 40–41), and More Ideas (p. 42). Prepare to emphasize the importance of healthy church leaders without allowing gossip about current leaders.

GROW from the weekly podcast on Ministry Grid (MinistryGrid.com/ExploreTheBible).

GATHER the following items: □ Personal Study Guides. □ A whiteboard and a marker. Prepare to display: □ PACK ITEM 4 (Poster: 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9). Make copies of the following to distribute to group members: □ PACK ITEM 7 (Handout: 1,2 Timothy; Titus Time Line); □ PACK ITEM 8 (Handout: Memory Verse Bookmark); and □ PACK ITEM 9 (Handout: Models of Church Structure).
**FIRST THOUGHTS**

Organizations rise and fall with leadership. Leaders who reflect the values of the company make a lasting difference. Most of us want our leaders to represent us well. We don't want to see our leaders’ names in the news for the wrong reasons. Paul specified high standards for church leaders knowing that their influence would go beyond the local body of believers they served.

*(In PSG, p. 28)* What requirements do you value the most when it comes to church leaders? Why do you include each requirement?

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**UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT**

**1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13**

During the early days in Jerusalem, the apostles guided the church’s growth. Although thousands of new believers were added to the church, the organization remained fairly simple. The apostles taught Scripture and the members grew spiritually as followers of Christ. They worshiped in the temple and in house gatherings, where they also enjoyed fellowship. At the same time, they ministered to each other with benevolence as well as spiritual encouragement *(Acts 2:41-47).*

Within a short time, the need for additional organization became apparent. In response to complaints about the lack of aid to certain widows, the apostles called a congregational meeting. In order for the apostles to focus on the ministry of the Word and prayer, the congregation chose a group of men who were antecedents of deacons. Simple, but important, qualifications sufficed at that time *(Acts 6:1-7).*

As the gospel expanded, new churches required more leaders. Paul began to plant congregations among the Gentiles. While he was aided by Barnabas, Silas, Luke, and others, Timothy and Titus became two of Paul’s primary missionary helpers.

The congregations were filled with new believers who needed guidance in choosing pastors and deacons to lead local ministries. Timothy and Titus helped Paul with many of these new churches. Timothy also served under Paul’s instruction in Thessalonica, Corinth, and Ephesus. Titus helped in Corinth and in the region of Macedonia, but he primarily worked in Crete. Both of Paul’s sons in the ministry needed direction to help the churches.

In his letters to Timothy and Titus, Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to set out specific qualifications for pastors and deacons. Churches today might add other qualities consistent with Scripture, but they should not ignore the basic characteristics laid out in these passages.
A PASTOR’S HEART (1 TIM. 3:1)

VERSE 1
The word translated *overseer* describes the office of pastor. Scripture uses three words to describe this role. The concept of overseeing relates to the spiritual leadership with which a pastor guides a congregation. It does not diminish the responsibility of the congregation in church decisions. The two other terms for the office of pastor are “elder” and “shepherd.” The first word refers to spiritual maturity (1 Tim. 3:6; 4:14), while the second describes the caring nurture a pastor uses in ministering to the flock of God (Eph. 4:11). In Titus 1:5-7, the terms *overseer* and *elder* are interchangeable. Two scriptural passages use all three words in various forms to refer to the office of pastor (Acts 20:17-28; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). Paul consistently addressed the pastor and deacon as the two offices of the church. (See Phil. 1:1.)

Paul affirmed that a man could *aspire* to be a pastor. To *aspire* should not be confused as blind ambition but as an earnest longing prompted by the Holy Spirit. The second phrase of this *trustworthy* saying uses a synonym—*desire*. It paints a word picture of someone reaching out for something.

The idea that the aspirant would be male finds support not only in Paul’s use of the word *he*, but also by the qualifications listed in the following verses. This restriction does not mean women cannot serve the church, but Scripture limits the office of pastor to men.

Paul described the office of pastor as *noble work*. To be an overseer should not be viewed as an honor to be achieved, but a work to be accomplished. Nor was this work simply another way to earn a living, but rather it was a task that was morally good if undertaken properly.

Within the guidance of Scripture, believers must consider what roles God desires them to fulfill in their churches. God wants every Christian to serve, but He calls some men to minister in specific roles as pastors or deacons.

How do the concepts of overseer, elder, and shepherd influence your view of a pastor’s role?

A PASTOR’S CHARACTER (1 TIM. 3:2-7)

VERSE 2
Not everyone who wants to be a pastor fits the biblical qualifications. Churches need to give careful consideration to the character of any potential pastor. Anyone who aspired to be an *overseer* should be *above reproach*. The single word translated *above reproach* means the pastor should be above criticism. It does not mean the pastor will never be criticized. Rather, this point requires that a pastor’s character reflect well on Christ whom he serves.
A second quality, being **the husband of one wife**, has been understood in different ways. One approach suggests a prohibition for having multiple wives. However, while people in the pagan cultures often had more than one wife, monogamy was standard among Christians. If all believers were monogamous, why would Paul feel compelled to emphasize this requirement for pastors?

Another issue involves pastors who have never been married. Is a single man unqualified to serve as pastor? Obviously, Paul did not intend this interpretation since he was unmarried. A third and most common approach would understand this passage to mean the pastor should not be divorced and remarried. It is also scripturally reasonable to understand the *husband of one wife* statement as referring to a man who is faithfully and unquestionably devoted to his wife. Churches should exercise biblical responsibility for interpreting and applying this passage.

Continuing the list of character qualities, Paul noted the pastor should be **self-controlled**. Someone who bears responsibility for the flock of God cannot make rash decisions or live irresponsibly. This characteristic matches that which follows: **sensible**. Together these words describe a leader who thinks before he speaks or acts, who is reasonable in human interactions, and who is known for sober-mindedness. As a result, a person who lives in this manner would be known as **respectable**, someone who behaves in a well-ordered manner. Being **hospitable** certainly involved hosting people in their homes but also includes an attitude of cordiality. Also, the pastor should be **able to teach**. A primary role of spiritual leadership involves making disciples through preaching, teaching, and mentoring.

**VERSE 3**

3 not an excessive drinker, not a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome, not greedy.

Churches should take care of their pastors’ families as well as they expect the pastors to take care of the church families.

Like ministers today, some pastors in the early church received financial support from their churches while others maintained secular vocations to support their families. Paul’s admonition for pastors not to be **greedy** related to their attitude toward money, not only in compensation from the churches but also in all areas of life. This instruction should not be misused by a church as an excuse for failing to provide financially for
their pastors. Churches should take care of their pastors’ families as well as they expect the pastors to take care of the church families.

**VERSES 4-7**
The pastor should **manage his own household competently.** This directive does not mean that he is a dictator in his home, but that he should exercise spiritual leadership in his family. The concept of *household* includes not only his wife and children, but also all areas of life. Paul expected the competent management of the pastor’s *household* to include having *his children under control.* However, this injunction does not mean a pastor remains responsible once they become adults.

The phrase **with all dignity** applies to the way the pastor manages his household, including the manner in which he raises his children. It also describes the respect children should have for their parents.

While all fathers have similar responsibilities for their families, pastors have an additional reason for proper leadership in the home. Paul tied the way the pastor managed **his own household** with the manner in which he would **take care of God’s church.** The culture of Paul’s day held fathers in high esteem. Children were expected to obey their parents and follow their examples. If a pastor could not guide his family properly, he would be incompetent in leading the church.

Pride remains a major challenge to any Christian but can be especially so for a pastor. Public prominence places pastors in precarious positions. Consequently, Paul argued that the pastor should not be a **new convert.** A believer needs a certain level of biblical knowledge and spiritual maturity before assuming the role of pastor. Too, the natural inclination of church members to encourage or praise the pastor can lead a new Christian to **become conceited.**

Pride was the original sin of the *devil,* who presumed to become like God. (See Isa. 14:13-14.) Paul was concerned that a new convert would be subject to the same *condemnation.* When people become believers, the church needs to help them grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord before they assume roles of leadership.

At the other extreme from pride is **disgrace.** Another *trap* of the devil involves tempting pastors and other Christian leaders into lifestyles of sin. Not only among church members, but also with *outsiders,* pastors should maintain a **good reputation** by living in an undeniably Christlike manner.

The word for *reputation* literally means witness. If the pastor’s conduct does not produce a good witness, non-believers could disparage the name of Christ. Believers can affirm men who demonstrate the characteristics of a faithful pastor. Whether in personal behavior, character, or leadership of his family, a good minister of Jesus Christ provides a role model the flock of God delights to follow.

(In PSG, p. 33) **How can you help your pastor consistently achieve these qualities?**
Deacons were never intended to be a board of directors or supervisors of the pastor. The apostles asked the congregation to select these men to serve under the direction of the pastors in order to free the pastors for prayer and proclamation of the Word. (See Acts 6:3-4.)

Deacons were never intended to be a board of directors or supervisors of the pastor.

The term deacon means “one who ministers or serves.” It is similar to the word Jesus used when He said He “did not come to be served, but to serve” (Matt. 20:28). Jesus provided the example of servant leadership that both pastors and deacons would do well to emulate.

The word likewise suggests these qualities required for deacons are similar to those of pastors. Deacons should be worthy of respect. Paul used three negative terms to illustrate his meaning of the phrase worthy of respect. First, deacons should not be hypocritical. This word can be translated as “double-tongued.” They cannot say one thing to one person and something else to another. Deacons must be sincere and maintain integrity in all their interactions. They cannot put forth a righteous image at church while behaving like unbelievers in other dealings.

Second, like pastors, deacons must not be known for drinking a lot of wine. This statement should not be taken as permission for deacons to consume alcoholic beverages on occasion. Should a lost person observe a deacon drinking alcohol, the accusation of hypocrisy would quickly arise. Deacons and pastors should set the example for the church of holy living.

A third qualification involved the deacon’s attitude toward money. Deacons do not receive income from the church, so this instruction obviously relates to business and personal financial affairs. They should not be greedy. Their attitude toward money ought to be generous, fair, and considerate of other people’s needs. Sincere, sober, sacrificial living will result in the respect of the congregation and the world at large.

Understanding verse 9 requires comprehension of the phrase the mystery of the faith. Paul often referred to the mystery of the gospel. (See Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 4:1; Eph. 6:19.) One aspect of the mystery involved God’s making salvation available to Gentiles as well as Jews. The larger issue was the fact God would save people through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus and through His Spirit live within believers. (See Col. 1:25-27.)

Paul’s admonition not only meant deacons should be followers of Christ, having the mystery of the faith personally, but also that they should be seen holding this mystery with a clear conscience. The word holding means not only to possess, but to preserve. Earlier in this epistle, Paul urged Timothy to have faith with a good conscience, unlike Hymenaeus and Alexander who “shipwrecked their faith” (1 Tim. 1:19-20).

Just as pastors should not be novices, prospective deacons should be tested first. Testing reflects the need for men to demonstrate consistency.
between the faith they profess and their daily practice. The congregation needs time to observe their faithfulness.

Only if they prove blameless can these men serve as deacons. The idea of being blameless does not mean they have achieved sinless perfection. Rather, prospective deacons should live so no one can accuse them of wrongdoing. Their reputations should be unblemished and merit the respect of the church.

Nowhere in Scripture does the idea of a deacon board appear. Paul used the phrase serve as deacons to describe what deacons do: they serve. Only men with servant hearts should be added to this group.

VERSE 11
While some translations render the opening word of verse 11 as “women,” the context appears to support the use of wives. Verses preceding and following this verse apply to the deacons. The insertion of descriptions for these women is more natural if the verse is a continuation of the deacons’ qualifications.

If this verse refers to the deacons’ wives, then, for men to serve as deacons, their wives also must be worthy of respect. Like the three qualifiers in verse 8, the definition of worthy of respect for the deacons’ wives includes three examples. They must not be slanderers. No one should accuse them of gossip or speaking ill of others. They also should be self-controlled, vigilant to maintain proper personal conduct. In summary, these women should be faithful in everything, whether it is their families or their service in the church.

VERSES 12-13
Like the pastors, deacons should be the husbands of one wife. The same arguments related to verse 2 apply here. Servants of the church should be faithful to their wives in every sense of the word. At the same time, deacons ought to be known for managing their children and their own households competently. If these men are to serve the church well, they must demonstrate competency in leading their families.

The word for in verse 13 ties the previous qualifications with what comes next. Deacons should prove themselves worthy because of the privilege in serving the church. If they have served well, they receive two benefits. First, they acquire a good standing for themselves. Faithful servants earn the respect of the church. Second, by maintaining godly lives, they can exhibit great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. The witness of their lives validates the witness of their words as they lead the church and share Christ with unbelievers.

Believers, especially church leaders, should honor God through their service to His church. In their personal reputations and their public actions, pastors and deacons have the opportunity and responsibility to glorify the Lord.

How is Christ glorified by the way your deacons serve the church?
LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

INTRODUCE: As the group arrives, ask: *What qualities do you value in leaders?* Encourage the group to discuss various leadership settings, including work, politics, sports, and so forth. List the requirements on a board.

COMPARE: *What requirements do you value the most when it comes to church leaders? Why do you include each requirement?* (PSG, p. 28) Compare the original list with the new list of requirements by asking: *How are these requirements for church leadership similar and different from other leadership positions? Should church leaders be held to different standards than other leaders? Why or why not?*

REVIEW: Use Pack Item 7 *(Handout: 1,2 Timothy; Titus Time Line)* to note the effort Paul had put forth to establish healthy churches prior to writing 1 Timothy.

ASSERT: Paul specified high standards for church leaders knowing that their influence would go beyond the local body of believers they served. (PSG p. 28)

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: As a volunteer reads 1 Timothy 3:1, point out that this is the second of Paul’s trustworthy sayings, or non-negotiable truths. Explain that the word “overseer” is synonymous with “pastor,” “elder,” and “bishop” in the New Testament.

VISUALIZE: Distribute copies of Pack Item 9 *(Handout: Models of Church Structure)* and highlight the roles of elders and deacons.

DEBATE: Call on a volunteer to read the first sentence in the PSG under verse 1 (p. 30): *There is a link between godly pastors and healthy churches.* Lead the group in exploring whether this statement is universally true. As you discuss the high standards that Paul called church leaders to, remind the group that through sanctification all believers are being made more Christlike.

ASK: *Why is it important for every believer to seriously consider the role God wants him or her to play in His work?* (PSG, p. 30)

READ: Invite someone to read 1 Timothy 3:2-7. Direct the group to pay attention to how Paul begins and ends the list.

DIRECT: Call attention to Pack Item 4 *(Poster: 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9).* Assert: Paul framed his list with statements about church leaders’ reputations.

STUDY: Create two teams. Direct one team to search 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and locate the verses supporting the qualities listed on Pack Item 4 *(Poster: 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9)*, while the second team locates the specific verses from Titus 1:6-9.
**GUIDE:** Lead the group in a discussion of the importance of character, reputation, and actions. Discuss these categories using the requirements listed by Paul. *How are they interrelated? Consider the impact that the reputation of a church leader can have among unbelievers.* From the PSG (p. 33): *How can you help your pastor consistently achieve these qualities?*

**READ:** As a volunteer reads 1 Timothy 3:8-13, encourage the group to look for similarities and differences between the requirements for a deacon and those for a pastor/overseer.

**HIGHLIGHT:** Invite the group to highlight the following sentence in the PSG (p. 34) under Verses 8-10: *The word deacon means “one who serves.”* Explain that this could include things like serving meals, caring for the needy, and freeing up apostles (or pastors today) to focus on prayer and preaching.

**ANALYZE:** For further study of the church leadership roles, lead the group to share insights they gained from the Bible Skill activity on page 33 of the PSG: *Create a list of the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3. Compare the following passages related to biblical expectations for every Christian: Ephesians 5:6-18; Philippians 1:27; 2:14-16; and Colossians 3:5-13. In what ways are the qualifications for pastors and deacons different from qualities of all believers? How are they similar? Compose a personal statement committing to fulfill scriptural expectations as you serve your church.*

**ASK:** *How has your understanding of church leadership changed as a result of this study?*

**EMPHASIZE:** Note the statement from the PSG (p. 35): *Godly behavior is to be expected of all church members, regardless of role or gender.*

**COMPARE:** Lead in a broad look at servant leadership. Invite small teams to read the following verses: Matthew 20:20-28; Luke 22:25-26; John 13:1-17; and Philippians 2:5-11. Ask: *How do these verses impact your understanding of the role of a deacon?* Call for responses.

**DISCUSS:** Direct the group to verse 13. Point out this is the week’s memory verse as you give copies of Pack Item 8 (Handout: Memory Verse Bookmark) to those who need one. Then discuss from the PSG (p. 35): *How does faithful service honor God? How might memorizing 1 Timothy 3:13 be a way for all believers to remember the importance of service?* (PSG, p. 35)

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**SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE** (IN MY CONTEXT)

**REVIEW:** Direct the group back to the original list of leadership qualifications compiled during the Focus Attention time. Lead the group to add any additional information they learned about church leadership based on what was discussed today.

**RESPOND:** Guide the group through the second question set in the PSG under In My Context (p. 36): *Discuss ways your group can encourage your pastor and his family. What actions should be taken as a result of this discussion?* Invite volunteers to take responsibility for these plans this week.

**CHALLENGE:** Encourage the group to take time throughout the week to pray about their roles in the church and where God is calling them to faithful service.

**PRAY:** Close in prayer, thanking God for the leadership He has placed in your church and asking Him to continue His sanctifying work in your leaders.
PRACTICE

• Review the personal statement you wrote for the Bible Skill activity (p. 33). Pray through this statement, asking for guidance as you serve the church.

• Follow up with those who volunteered to help implement the group’s suggestions for ways to encourage your pastor and his family. Remind them of the suggestions and offer to help in organization and implementation.

• Prayerfully consider if there are people in your group whom you see God calling to roles in the church. Contact them and affirm the giftings you see.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

Create smaller groups of two to five people. Direct the groups to write a “Wanted Ad” for a hypothetical church leadership position. Invite the groups to share their job descriptions and make a list of qualities and requirements for church leadership.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

• Direct the group to the following sentence under Verse 1 in the PSG (p. 30): Aspiring to be a spiritual leader is worthwhile, but there can be a big gap between aspiration and qualification. Ask: How can we discern when a desire to lead is a calling from God? Guide the group in considering ways to affirm those called to this noble work.

• For further understanding of 1 Timothy 3:2 and the different interpretations of the phrase “the husband of one wife,” use information under Verse 2 (p. 36) and the PSG (p. 31) to discuss the meaning. Emphasize that marriage is ultimately a picture of Christ and the church. Conclude by pointing out that each local church has the responsibility of interpreting for themselves what verse 2 means and how it applies.

• For further discussion of 1 Timothy 3:8-13, call on a volunteer to read Galatians 5:22-23. Ask: How do the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 serve as practical expressions of the fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

Lead the group to quietly reflect on the third question set under In My Context on page 36 of the PSG: List ways you honor the Lord both in your church and outside of it. What actions will you take this week to honor Him in your church? List actions you will take to honor Him outside the church. Call for a volunteer to share their thoughts.

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA

God has a plan for each person in your group. As your group considers what role God desires them to play in the local church, play or sing the hymn, “Take My Life, and Let It Be Consecrated,” by Frances R. Havergal.
Believers must be nourished on God’s Word so they will know the truth.

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-13

MEMORY VERSE: 1 TIMOTHY 4:13

READ 1 Timothy 3:14–4:16, First Thoughts (p. 44), and Understand the Context (pp. 44–45). Make notes on what Paul says believers must do as you read.

STUDY 1 Timothy 4:1-13, using Explore the Text (pp. 45–49). Familiarize yourself with PACK ITEM 5 (Poster: First-Century Heresies) and PACK ITEM 13 (Handout: First-Century Heresies) focusing on Gnosticism and legalism. Pay attention to the methods Paul recommended to Timothy for discerning and refuting false teaching.

PLAN your group time with a focus on the sufficiency of Scripture to teach us truth, while also considering how we benefit from prayer, the Holy Spirit, and community. Tailor the plans for your group using ideas under Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 50–51), More Ideas (p. 52), and ideas included online at Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploretheBible/Adults.

GROW with other group leaders at the Groups Ministry blog (LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry).

GATHER the following items: Personal Study Guides; and A variety of snacks for the group. (Be mindful of food allergies or other special dietary concerns.) Prepare to display the following Pack Items: PACK ITEM 5 (Poster: First-Century Heresies); and PACK ITEM 6 (Key Verse: 2 Timothy 2:15). Make copies for the group of: PACK ITEM 8 (Handout: Memory Verse Bookmark); and PACK ITEM 13 (Handout: First-Century Heresies).
**FIRST THOUGHTS**

Our world is filled with scam artists and people bending the truth for their own benefit. We should carefully examine the claims a person makes, especially when they want access to our money. In the same way, the devil continues to sell beliefs and behavior that either deny or twist the message of the gospel. It is imperative for followers of Christ to be aware of distorted beliefs and deceptive doctrines. We must be equipped by God’s Word and stay the course of true faith.

(In PSG, p. 37) **Have you ever been the victim of a scam or false advertisement? How did you respond in the future to other “can’t miss” opportunities?**

**UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT**

1 TIMOTHY 3:14–4:16

Paul wrote this letter while visiting Macedonia. He had left Timothy in Ephesus to help the church gain more solid ground in doctrine and Christian living. While Paul hoped to rejoin Timothy, he knew that much needed to be done in the meantime. He wanted the believers to know how to behave not only in church, but as the church. Spiritual growth was important not only for the people’s sakes, but for the reputation of the “church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

The basis for Christian faith and practice lay in the mystery of godliness, which Paul defined as none other than Jesus Himself. Paul used the concept of mystery several ways on different occasions. Earlier in this letter, he addressed the mystery of the faith (1 Tim. 3:9). In his epistle to the Colossians, Paul wrote about the hidden mystery regarding the gospel and the Gentiles (Col. 1:27). In the current context, Paul shared what probably was an early confession of faith regarding Jesus (1 Tim. 3:16). True godliness, then, involves believing, living, and proclaiming the gospel of Christ.

Proper orthodoxy (right belief) and orthopraxy (right behavior) were vital as the church encountered opposition from a demonically influenced world. Paul warned about the false teachers that not only would arise in the later days, but were already afflicting believers. Hypocritically demanding of others what they would not endure themselves, these phony prophets claimed to be defenders of the Jewish Law. In reality, they were subvertors of both law and grace.

Paul saw Timothy as his son in the ministry and, as such, wanted his protégé to succeed as a good minister of Jesus Christ. As opposed to speculation and myths, Timothy’s teaching should focus on godliness so the people could place their hope securely in Christ alone.

**KEY DOCTRINE**

*Scripture*

The Bible reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried (Ps. 19:7-10).

**BIBLE SKILL**

Compare passages that use the same word or phrase.

To understand the term “later times,” compare Paul’s description in 1 Timothy 4:1-4 with the following passages: 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 2 Peter 3:3-7; and Jude 1:18-19. Write a summary of what you discover. Compare the above passages with Hebrews 1:1-3. How does this comparison add to your understanding of later times? How does your concept affect your daily decisions and conduct of life?
Timothy had a gift for preaching and teaching, but Paul did not leave him in Ephesus only to teach. He wanted Timothy to be an example of how to live for Christ. Timothy was to give careful attention to his life and his teaching. Persevering in both would not only benefit his hearers, but himself.

**EXPLORE THE TEXT**

**BE AWARE (1 TIM. 4:1-5)**

**VERSE 1**
Paul based his advice to Timothy not on human understanding but the inspiration of the Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit leads His people into truth (John 16:13) and inspires all Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16), Paul was speaking under His guidance.

The later times would be marked by deceptive teachers. Many first-century Christians believed they were living in the later times. That perception was true in some respects, but the phrase can also refer to the end of time before Christ returns. The church understood the last times as beginning with the first advent of Christ and continuing until His Second Coming. Since Paul was warning about false teachers among the churches and the effects of their seductive work, he obviously used the term to describe the current situation.

Identification of the reference for the pronoun some is important. If we interpret this term to mean believers, the verse could mean that it is possible for Christians to depart from the faith, as in losing their salvation. However, such is not accurate either from a syntactical or doctrinal position. Reading this verse in context identifies the term with the persons mentioned in the verses 2-3. Therefore, Paul meant the false teachers had departed from the teachings of the true faith and followed deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons. Instead of teaching God’s truth, they had chosen Satan’s lies.

John later wrote about discerning between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (1 John 4:6). Some scholars interpret the deceitful spirits as being the false teachers themselves. However, the text is best understood in its most simple interpretation—the false teachers had yielded to deceiving spirits and demonic doctrine.

**VERSE 2**
The agency for such deception involved the hypocrisy of liars. The false teachers of Ephesus were like the kinds of persons Jesus described—eager to place burdens on others that they were not willing to bear for themselves (Matt. 23:1-4). Isaiah equated hypocrites with persons who practiced vile iniquity (Isa. 32:6). Jesus associated these kinds of people with the devil, the father of lies (John 8:44).

The most cunning liars feel no shame because their consciences are seared. This word picture portrays persons who no longer could distinguish between right and wrong. They had lied so many times that their moral compass failed to influence them.
VERSES 3-5

3 They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods that God created to be received with gratitude 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, since it is sanctified by the word of God and by prayer.

VERSES 3-5

Two examples of deceptive teaching afflicting the Ephesians involved the forbidding of marriage and the abstinence from certain foods. Represented by the term they, the persons guilty of this spiritual arrogance were the liars mentioned in the previous verse.

Paul was on record as encouraging some people to remain single in order to serve Christ (1 Cor. 7:7). At the same time, he encouraged people to marry in fulfillment of God’s purpose for the family (1 Cor. 7:1-9). Apparently, some of the false teachers were forbidding people to marry at all.

A second area of deceptive doctrine involved the kinds of foods believers could eat. This could refer to either or both of two situations that Paul encountered in Gentile churches. In some places, Jewish Christians from Jerusalem demanded that Gentile Christians observe the dietary restrictions of Judaic law. At Corinth, the issue focused on whether believers should eat meat that had been first offered to idols and then sold in the marketplace. (See 1 Cor. 8.)

Paul declared that God created various food sources to be received with gratitude. His reference to persons who believe and know the truth coincides with other passages about eating in faith. (See 1 Cor. 10:23-30.) Mature Christians not only have faith in the truth, but they know it experientially. They apply God’s truth in all aspects of daily life.

Continuing the emphasis of verse 3, Paul reiterated in verse 4 that everything created by God is good. His point was to counteract the false teaching of Judaizers and others regarding what believers could eat. Modern readers should not take this statement beyond its context and try to apply it as a license for inordinate behavior. Paul again focused on the way food was to be received with thanksgiving. Offering thanks with one’s meal should not be a mere formality but a genuine acknowledgment that our sustenance comes from the Lord.

The idea that food can be sanctified might be confusing if we associate this term with the way it applies to the sanctification of believers. The word itself simply means “to be separated or set aside,” usually for God. In the current context, Paul saw food as having a role in fulfilling God’s purpose as it is set apart for God by strengthening the believer’s body.

We can make even the simple act of eating an aspect of worship.

When we offer a prayer of thanksgiving over a meal, we acknowledge God as the source and His service as the purpose of His provision. As such, we can make even the simple act of eating an aspect of worship.

Paul’s inclusion of the phrase the word of God presents a more difficult interpretation. Some writers think early Christians offered a Scripture quotation along with their prayers before they ate. In any case, Paul’s emphasis was that believers should engage in dietary habits that are consistent with God’s Word. We must be aware that false teachers will try to lead us astray. By maintaining clear consciences and following God’s Word, we can discern between the true and the false.
How can you help others be aware of false teachers and avoid their deception?

**BE DISCIPLINED (1 TIM. 4:6-10)**

**VERSE 6**
Paul was not suggesting Timothy was not already *a good servant of Christ Jesus*. Instead, he was encouraging his son in the ministry to do what was already in his heart—to teach *these things*, the truths of the gospel, *to the brothers and sisters*. Although Timothy was a pastor of the church, his ultimate service was to *Christ Jesus*.

The *good servant of Christ Jesus* is *nourished by the words of the faith and the good teaching* that Timothy had been following. Notice the wording of the first phrase. Servants of Jesus are *nourished* not merely by words of faith, but words of the faith, meaning the gospel. They also are nourished by *good teaching*. The term includes sound doctrine. Timothy not only had been taught the Scriptures since he had been a child (2 Tim. 3:14-15), but also he had *followed* them. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul commended his protégé for faithfully following his teaching and accepting the afflictions that came from doing so (2 Tim. 3:10-11).

**VERSES 7-10**
In contrast to sound doctrine were the *pointless and silly myths* that Paul had already referenced as a problem in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:4). When he advised Timothy to *have nothing to do* with such things, Paul was not saying Timothy had become embroiled with these false teachings. He wanted Timothy not to spend his time engaged with these pointless arguments.

As opposed to the futility of silly myths, Timothy should *train* himself *in godliness*. The word *train* means to discipline oneself. Timothy should focus on developing godliness in his life and in the lives of the Ephesian believers. The idea of training was similar to the regimen an athlete endures to prepare for competition. Using this metaphor for illustration, Paul noted that *the training of the body has limited benefit*. He was not saying people should not take care of their physical well being. Instead, Paul contrasted physical discipline with godliness. While the first is somewhat helpful, the latter is beneficial in every way. Physical development benefits participants temporally, but godliness *holds promise* not only for the *present life* but also for the *life to come*.

The phrase *this saying* in verse 9 refers to Paul’s admonition in the previous verses about godliness. Such a statement was *trustworthy* and deserved *full acceptance*. The phrase *for this reason* in verse 10 could tie what follows to Paul’s previous statement regarding the benefit of godliness. The term *we* included Paul and Timothy, who together would *labor and strive* in ministering the gospel. Service to Christ and His church involves work and effort.

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Paul and Timothy worked because of their hope, which was not in any human agency but in the living God. Believers have hope because our God is not an inanimate idol made by human hands, but He is alive and involved in our lives.

Our hope is also in the fact that God is the Savior of all people. This statement does not mean that all people will be saved. Such an interpretation would be contrary to other Scriptures. (See Matt. 7:13-23.) Scholars suggest several understandings of the phrase of all people. One interpretation takes the word Savior to mean “preserver.” Another reading emphasizes God has the means of salvation for all people through Christ. Sadly, many refuse His gift and reject Christ. The latter may be why Paul added the qualifying phrase especially of those who believe.

(Lin PSG, p. 43) *What makes godliness a difficult discipline? How does the commitment to discipline yourself in godliness fit into your priorities?*

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**BE AN EXAMPLE (1 TIM. 4:11-13)**

**VERSES 11-12**

11 Command and teach these things. 12 Don’t let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.

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**VERSES 11-12**

Paul instructed Timothy to focus on teaching the gospel, gaining a hearing by the godly life he lived. The pastor has God-given authority to instruct God’s people in the application of God’s Word. Timothy had the responsibility and the right to command as well as to teach these things. The phrase these things refers to what had just been set forth.

Some of Timothy’s opponents may have used age as a basis to challenge his leadership in Ephesus. Paul encouraged him not to let anyone, especially false teachers, despise his youth. The term despise means to look down on someone with scorn. The culture valued the aged. An older teacher generally was considered wiser and more knowledgeable. Paul wanted Timothy not to allow anyone to belittle his ministry simply because he was relatively young. Still, Timothy may have been at least thirty years old.

**How does a young pastor gain the respect of a more mature audience?**

How does a young pastor gain the respect of a more mature audience? Paul urged Timothy to set an example for the believers. Timothy's personal conduct would validate the truth of his words. The five areas mentioned in verse 12 were not meant to be an exhaustive list but represented ways the young pastor could show other believers how to behave.

Being an example in speech meant not only what Timothy preached but also how he said it. Ministers are to speak in such a way that brings credit to the substance of what they say. Likewise, all Christians are to be careful of the way they speak.
Being an example in conduct certainly included all the qualifications for a minister previously mentioned. However, this idea goes further to include behavior that makes up a person’s character. Whether in public or in private, believers should act as people of God. In this case, the focus is not merely on ministers, but the conduct of all believers.

Being an example in love has obvious implications. People would be known as followers of Jesus by the love they had toward one another. (See John 13:35.) Of all the commands regarding how believers should treat one another, the most common and important was to love one another.

Being an example in faith does not mean “the faith,” but in the demonstration of trusting God. Taking God at His word involves carrying out His commands as well as believing Him for His blessings.

Being an example in purity was not intended to imply that, as a young man, Timothy was more subject to sins of the flesh than anyone else. Rather, Paul wanted Timothy to show his life was beyond reproach morally. In the same way, all believers are to live pure and holy lives before the Lord.

VERSE 13
Paul anticipated seeing Timothy again. Until then, Timothy should give attention to three primary aspects of his pastoral ministry. Public reading referred to the reading of Scripture, likely as part of the worship service. The canon of New Testament texts had not been gathered yet, so the reading probably involved Old Testament scrolls. However, as Paul instructed churches to read his letters, the public reading could have included one or more of Paul’s epistles or other New Testament writings. (See 1 Thess. 5:27; Col. 4:16.)

Exhortation began with the truth of scriptural texts and involved strong encouragement of people to believe and behave according to the Word. The previous adjective public could apply to the word exhortation as well. Timothy apparently had a gift for preaching. Paul wanted Timothy to exercise this gift for the benefit of the church and the advancement of the gospel. (See 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6.)

Teaching may have been the instructive part of the church’s worship. However, it also could imply the disciplemaking aspect of pastoral ministry. Both publicly and personally, Timothy was to teach not only the doctrinal truths of Scripture but also their practical application in life.

Like Timothy, believers must remain focused on God’s Word to be examples of godly living. As we live out the gospel among other believers and before the world, we encourage one another and bear witness to our Lord Jesus Christ.

(In PSG, p. 44) In what ways could you be an example for believers, beginning in your home?
LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

INTRODUCE: Bring in a variety of snacks for the group to enjoy—some healthy and some with less nutritional value. Being careful not to criticize anyone's eating habits, lead the group to discuss which of the snacks are the most nourishing. Ask: Have you ever been misled into thinking something was healthy when it wasn't? Say: While it’s fine to snack on a variety of foods, in order to be physically healthy, we must be nourished on food with nutritional value. Similarly, believers must be nourished on God’s Word to stay spiritually healthy.

TRANSITION: State from the paragraph on page 37 of the PSG: It is imperative for followers of Christ to be aware of distorted beliefs and deceptive doctrines. We must be equipped by God’s Word and stay the course of true faith.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: As a volunteer reads 1 Timothy 4:1-5, direct the group to pay attention to how Paul described false teachers and false doctrine.

ILLUSTRATE: Point to Pack Item 5 (Poster: First-Century Heresies) displayed in the room. Distribute copies of Pack Item 13 (Handout: First-Century Heresies). Then use the handout to briefly explain what a heresy is and to discuss the heresies facing the first-century churches. Call for examples of each type of heresy facing the first-century churches.

DISCUSS: How does sin desensitize a person to truth? What other factors might desensitize a person to truth? (PSG, p. 41)

ANALYZE: Lead the group to consider how the practices listed in 1 Timothy 4:3-4 were antithetical to the truth of the gospel. Read the following sentence from the PSG (p. 40): The false teachers promoted a legalism that minimized God’s grace and maximized man’s rules.

EMPHASIZE: Invite a volunteer to reread verse 4. Ask: How can an attitude of thanksgiving prevent abuse of God’s good gifts? How can thanksgiving prevent denial of God’s good gifts?

READ: Direct the group to silently read 1 Timothy 4:6-10, looking for ways Paul used physical metaphors to speak about spiritual things.

EXPLAIN: In verses 1-5, Paul warned against false teachers. In verses 6-10, Paul’s focus shifted to encouragement. While Paul wanted Timothy to be wary of false teachers, he also wanted him focused on growing in godliness. Instead of turning to speculative teachings, believers are to focus on godliness and the gospel.

ASK: What makes godliness a difficult discipline? How does the commitment to discipline yourself in godliness fit into your priorities? (PSG, p. 43)

DISCUSS: How can we reconcile God’s free gift of grace with concepts of “training,” “striving,” and “laboring”? Direct the group to the following sentences in the PSG (p. 42): We don’t labor to earn God’s favor but rather because we have received God’s grace.
MINI-LECTURE: Briefly explain that verse 10 points to God’s goodness to all: *God is the Provider, Preserver, and Sustainer of all. His salvation is available to all but effective only to those who believe.* Refer to the last paragraph under verse 10 in the PSG (p. 42).

READ: As a volunteer reads 1 Timothy 4:11-13, encourage the group to consider this question: *Is the Word of God sufficient?*

DEBATE: Challenge the group to defend the sufficiency of Scripture. Ask: *Can the Word of God convince and thrive without godly examples? Why or why not? What’s the importance of godly examples in sharing the gospel?* Affirm the sufficiency of Scripture, referencing 2 Timothy 3:15-17: *While Scripture is sufficient, God has also called believers to set a good example, as outlined in 1 Timothy 4:11-13.*

ASK: How has today’s discussion affected your answer to the question on page 44 of the PSG?

PRESENT: Timothy was in his twenties or thirties, which was considered very young for a leadership position. While Paul affirmed Timothy as a leader, he placed the responsibility of defending himself on Timothy. Paul exhorted Timothy not to let others look down on him and to set an example.

DISPLAY: Point to Pack Item 6 (Key Verse: 2 Timothy 2:15). After the group reflects on the verse, ask: *What responsibility do believers have to defend their gospel witness? How did Paul expect believers to be able to defend that witness?*

EMPHASIZE: The focus of our defense is on knowing God’s Word. Direct someone to read the Key Doctrine (Scripture) on page 44 of the PSG.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

REVIEW: Reread 1 Timothy 4:1. Remind the group that heresies, false teachings, and misinterpretations must be avoided. Guide the group in recalling how today’s focal verses equip us to identify and resist false teaching: Verses 1-5 warn against a conscience that has been desensitized to the Holy Spirit and encourages a spirit of thanksgiving. Verses 6-10 focus on training toward godliness and being nourished on God’s Word. Verses 11-13 remind believers to read Scripture and follow trusted teaching, while also setting a good example.

DISPLAY: Call for volunteers to name one action they will take this week as a result of today’s study.

RESPOND: Guide the group through the second question set under In My Context in the PSG (p. 45): *Discuss as a group ways of engaging each other in discussions about theology, including false doctrines. How can the group serve as a means for discovering false teachings?*

CHALLENGE: Encourage the group to pray through 1 Timothy 4:13 this week, asking God to reveal an area that they should focus on improving in the example they set. Have copies of Pack Item 8 (Handout: Memory Verse Bookmark) ready to give to those who need one.

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God for the goodness and sufficiency of His revealed Word. Ask that He would guide the group in faithful and correct understanding of Scripture.
PRACTICE

• Pray through 1 Timothy 4:13. Ask God to reveal any areas where your witness needs strengthening.
• Consider ways you can continue to foster healthy theological discussions with your group.
• Were there any theological questions raised this week that warrant more discussion, either as a group or with individuals? If you don’t have the resources for studying these, reach out to a leader or pastor at your church for suggestions.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

As the group arrives, write the following categories at the top of a board: Essentials, Convictions, and Preferences. Ask: What’s the difference between each of these categories when it comes to theology and the church? Encourage the group to look up definitions of each word to help distinguish the categories. Ask: How should believers respond to disagreements within each of these categories? What sources can we turn to when distinguishing truth from false teaching? Point out that disagreements regarding preferences don’t always warrant our time and energy, while essentials are based on non-negotiable truths that must be followed.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

• For further study of 1 Timothy 4:1-4, lead the group to complete the Bible Skill found in the PSG (p. 41): To understand the term “later times,” compare Paul’s description in 1 Timothy 4:1-4 with the following passages: 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 2 Peter 3:3-7; and Jude 1:18-19. Write a summary of what you discover. Compare the above passages with Hebrews 1:1-3. How does this comparison add to your understanding of later times? How does your concept affect your daily decisions and conduct of life?

• To enhance the discussion of godliness in 1 Timothy 4:8, explain: Paul states that godliness has value both in the present life and in the life to come. Draw an attitude scale with the left representing value for the present life and the right representing value for the life to come. Ask: How does godliness impact the present life? The life to come? Lead the group to consider which type of promises they tend to be more focused on and note where they fall on the scale. Discuss: What are pitfalls in focusing too much on one or the other?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

Encourage the group to look back through each Scripture division and share something revealed about God from each section.

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA

Believers must value sound doctrine. Encourage your group to sing along to “This I Believe (The Creed),” by Hillsong Worship, affirming truths of the Word.
Believers should care for others, including widows and ministers.

1 TIMOTHY 5:1-8,17-21

MEMORY VERSE: 1 TIMOTHY 5:25

READ 1 Timothy 5:1–6:2, First Thoughts (p. 54), and Understand the Context (pp. 54–55). Highlight any confusing passages as you read.

STUDY 1 Timothy 5:1-8,17-21 and Explore the Text on pages 55–59. Refer to a trusted commentary for insight into any passages that you highlighted. Review PACK ITEM 10 (Handout: Timothy: A Snapshot) for additional background.

PLAN the group time using ideas under Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 60–61). Tailor the plans for your group using More Ideas (p. 62) and ideas included online at Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible/Adults/LeaderExtras. Determine how you will encourage group participation in the discussion. Look into how your church meets the needs of those in your community.

GROW from the weekly podcast on Ministry Grid (MinistryGrid.com/ExploreTheBible).

GATHER the following items: □ Personal Study Guides; □ An article on widows in the Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary or in a similar resource; and for More Ideas (p. 62): □ A family tree. Prepare to display the following Pack Items: □ PACK ITEM 2 (Outlines of 1,2 Timothy; Titus); and □ PACK ITEM 6 (Key Verse: 2 Timothy 2:15). Make copies for the group of: □ PACK ITEM 10 (Handout: Timothy: A Snapshot).
**FIRST THOUGHTS**

Most of us realize that a church is not a shrine for morally perfect people. It is full of people like you and me who are often messy, careless, confused, selfish, and desperately in need of forgiveness and correction. With all our relational challenges we sometime fail to minister and communicate respectfully and mercifully. Thankfully, God provides clear instructions about how to treat people in needy situations and pastors in leadership. 

(In PSG, p. 46) **What role should the church play in caring for the needs of people in the community?**

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**UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT**

**1 TIMOTHY 5:1–6:2**

Relationships comprise a significant theme in Paul’s writings. He wanted believers to treat one another responsibly and lovingly. As a pastor, Timothy came into contact with all types of people. Paul reminded him the older men and women were to be treated like fathers and mothers, while the younger people should be considered brothers and sisters.

Of special concern were the widows. God was called the champion of the widow (Ps. 68:5). Scripture often reminds God’s people to care for these women who had no husbands to provide for them (Ex. 22:22; Isa. 1:17; Jas. 1:27). The church gave benevolence assistance to many believers who suffered because of their faith, especially widows. The first deacons were established to lead the ministry to widows (Acts 6:1-6).

At the same time, Paul felt the church should not assume responsibility that rightly belonged to widows’ families. Some of the widows were younger and able to remarry. Many of the older widows had adult children and extended families capable of providing for their needs. Paul wanted Timothy to lead the church in establishing appropriate guidelines for this important ministry.

Another category for Timothy’s consideration involved the elders. The term *older man* or “elder” carries several meanings. In 1 Timothy 5:1, the word used describes older men. Given that the immediately preceding context deals with widows, one could easily think that Paul’s instruction in verses 17-22 also involved the older men. However, this section specifically refers to persons who preach and teach, leading to a different focus—the pastors of the churches. They are workers who were worthy of their wages and leaders who deserved honor. Paul outlined several ways Timothy and the church should relate responsibly to these spiritual leaders, including how to deal with pastors who had been accused of wrongdoing.
At this point, Paul interjected personal instructions for Timothy. Because of Timothy’s health problems, Paul gave him a medical dispensation to mix some wine with the water he typically drank.

In the opening verses of chapter 6, Paul offered guidance for how believing servants and masters should relate to one another. In all these relationships, Paul emphasized responsible behavior that honored the Lord.

**EXPLORE THE TEXT**

**RESPECT ALL** *(1 Tim. 5:1-2)*

**VERSES 1-2**

In a distinct change of subject from the previous chapter, Paul addressed Timothy’s interaction with various kinds of church members. In the first chapter, Paul did not hesitate to urge his son in the ministry to challenge the false teachers who threatened the church. As he moved to the normal interactions with the Ephesian believers, Paul encouraged Timothy to be careful how he spoke to them.

Timothy was not to *rebuke* but to *exhort* an *older man*. The mood of this phrase was not an imperative command, but carried a more instructive tone. Rebuking someone involved strong chastisement. Not only in the culture, but especially in the church, older men expected respect. Paul understood the difficulty Timothy would have if the younger pastor used a tone that appeared disrespectful.

At the same time, Timothy might need to offer pastoral correction and admonishment. In such situations, Paul suggested he *exhort* the older man as he would a *father*. The sense of the term *exhort* involves an earnest appeal. While demonstrating appropriate deference, the young pastor could urge his senior parishioners to right action.

Similarly, in dealing with *younger men*, Timothy should relate to them as *brothers*. This approach did not overlook Timothy’s pastoral authority in leading the church but rather employed loving discretion in relationships. The younger men might have questioned the right of someone their own age telling them what to do or not do. Paul knew Timothy would have better results by exhorting them as brothers.

In the same way, Timothy was to be careful in the way he addressed the women of his flock. Continuing the same sentence relating to exhortation, Paul told Timothy to relate to the *older women as mothers*. In addressing the issue of the *younger women*, Paul recognized the inherent problems of a young male in constant interaction with females nearer to his age. The way Timothy related to these women was important. Paul encouraged him to treat them as *sisters* and relate to them *with all purity*.

Paul’s instruction to Timothy would be well taken not only by pastors, but also by all believers. If we treat one another as respected family members, we will experience healthy relationships that benefit the church and honor the Lord.
In what ways can you demonstrate respect for other church members while encouraging them to right belief and behavior?

**CARE FOR WIDOWS (1 TIM. 5:3-8)**

**VERSES 3-7**

3 Support widows who are genuinely in need. 4 But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them learn to practice godliness toward their own family first and to repay their parents, for this pleases God. 5 The widow who is truly in need and left all alone has put her hope in God and continues night and day in her petitions and prayers; 6 however, she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. 7 Command this also, so that they will be above reproach.

God cares deeply about the helpless, especially widows and orphans. Society in Paul’s day did not provide a safety net for widows or others unable to care for themselves. Generally, the husband was the wage earner. If a husband died, his widow often had no means of providing for herself.

Christians especially found themselves in need of help as they were persecuted for the faith. From the earliest days of the church, believers gave sacrificially so brothers and sisters in Christ could receive proper provision. (See Acts 2:42-45.)

Paul encouraged Timothy to **support** the believing **widows**. The church did not have a responsibility for widows in general, but it embraced the idea of caring for those Christian women whose husbands had died. Based on the practice of a daily benevolence (Acts 6:1-6), the provision primarily involved food but could have included clothing and other matters.

Paul limited the church’s responsibility to those widows who were **genuinely in need**. Apparently some women were taking advantage of the church’s generosity. Timothy needed guidance regarding how to care for believing widows while not placing an undue burden on the congregation.

Paul offered several guidelines for the church. The first line of provision for **any widow** was her family. The reference to **children** obviously suggests adult children, as they were expected to provide for their mother. If the woman was older, adult **grandchildren** might also help.

Paul considered believers’ care for their own family as a way to **practice godliness**. Honoring one’s father and mother was the first commandment containing a promise (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:2). Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and scribes who disregarded the commandment to honor one’s mother and father. They had devised ways to get around providing for their parents financially by claiming they were offering a gift to God. Jesus denounced their hypocrisy (Matt. 15:1-9).

Paul also urged children to take action as a way to **repay their parents**. The reference to parents does not take away from the immediate issue of widows. Instead, Paul emphasized that parents provided for the children when they are young, making it only right that adult children should care for the widowed mother or grandmother in her old age. Such a practice **pleases God**.

Paul further qualified the **widow who is truly in need**. She did not have children who could care for her, and she was **left all alone**. She did not have extended family that could help. In such a situation, she **has put her hope in God**. Her condition necessitated an exercise of faith. She was not imposing her need on the church as a first resort, but trusted the Lord with her needs. The church is an extension of God’s hand in such provision.
Another characteristic of a worthy widow is her piety, as demonstrated in her prayer life. She shows her faith by her petitions and prayers. These terms describe aspects of the widow’s prayer. First, her prayers are fervent. The terms carry the connotation of strenuous pleading. Second, these requests are directed toward God, whom the widow trusts to answer. Third, the widow’s prayers are persistent as she continues in them night and day. Jesus described such importunity in His teaching about effective prayer (Luke 11:5-8).

Paul contrasted the sincerely dependent woman of faith with one who is self-indulgent. This kind of person lived for personal pleasure rather than for God. The word picture can include sensual satisfaction as opposed to spiritual sacrifice. Such a person is dead even while she lives. This phrase refers to someone who is spiritually dead. The implication is that a widow who forsakes the service of God to pursue immoral desires likely was not a true believer in the first place. In such a case, the church had no obligation to provide for her.

The object of Timothy’s command and the antecedent of the word they could involve three different applications. These references might mean the church at large, since the overall passage includes guidance for the congregation. The terms could refer to the children of the widows, given the focus of verse 8. However, the most obvious point of view associates this verse with what has preceded—the widows themselves. Timothy was to command the widows so they would be above reproach. Women who were the beneficiaries of the church’s benevolence should live in such a way as to bring credit to the congregation and its Lord.

VERSE 8
Paul returned to the emphasis of verse 4 that each person should provide for his own family. Some persons have used this verse to support the idea that husbands should take care of their families, particularly in regard to finances. While that principle is true, the context is more specific in relating to the widows. Before a congregation assumes responsibility to provide for a widow’s needs, her family should accept this obligation as a blessed opportunity.

The phrase especially for his own household brings the commission closer to home. Certainly the extended family (siblings, nephews, and such) should get involved with a widow’s needs if there is no closer relative. However, if the widow is part of one’s household, then that family has the primary role in her care.

Paul likened anyone who refused this responsibility as being worse than an unbeliever, and someone who has denied the faith. Such strong language did not suggest that people could lose their salvation, but rather that their lack of godly service to their own families reflects a denial of the faith they profess. Loving ministry to widows and others in genuine need is one way we demonstrate our faith.

How can you help meet the needs of a widow or other needy believer in your church?
CARE FOR PASTORS (1 TIM. 5:17-21)

VERSES 17-18
The local church’s pastoral leadership deserved to be supported financially and treated with respect. The term *elders* was a formal title for the pastors. The Bible consistently refers to two offices—pastors and deacons. Scripture uses three different words to relate to the office of pastor, including overseer (or bishop), elder, and shepherd.

On this occasion, Paul addressed the way the church should relate to pastors who are *good leaders*. The emphasis of the phrase is on the quality of leadership these pastors provide. It is assumed that they are leaders, providing spiritual guidance for the church. Some pastors exercised commendable leadership and, as such, were *worthy of double honor*. This phrase can refer to compensation as well as holding in esteem. The pastor is worthy of honor because of his role. The church should especially recognize the pastors who excel in their work.

By pointing especially to pastors who *work hard at preaching and teaching*, Paul did not suggest a division of elders, with some being teaching pastors and some ruling pastors. The ability to teach was one of the main qualifications for pastors. (See 1 Tim. 3:2.) Paul’s point was that pastors who were diligent in their primary role of *preaching and teaching* deserved acknowledgment.

The idea that the phrase *double honor* refers to compensation finds support in Paul’s quotation of Scripture. He quoted from two passages in Deuteronomy. The first used a proverb: *Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain* (Deut. 25:4). The word picture described the animal being used to turn a mill that grinds grain. The ox should not be prevented from eating grain that falls to the ground. In the same way, a pastor who provided spiritual food for his congregation deserves to receive food from the congregation. Paul used this same reference in his letter to the Corinthians. Although he personally had not taken advantage of his right to be supported by the church, he asserted that churches should provide for the physical needs of their pastors. (See 1 Cor. 9:9-14.)

The second scriptural reference relates to the expectation of laborers to receive just payment for their work. Paul’s statement that *the worker is worthy of his wages* was a paraphrase of another Mosaic law (Deut. 24:14-15). Neither statement should be taken to reduce the pastor to being merely a hired hand. One of the qualifications for a pastor involved his lack of greed (1 Tim. 3:3). He does not serve for financial gain. At the same time, the pastor must take care of his family. The church has the responsibility to provide for the needs of the pastor and his family, just as it has the right to expect the pastor to provide for the spiritual needs of the congregation.

VERSE 19
Don’t accept an accusation against an elder unless it is supported by two or three witnesses.
required multiple witnesses in any case regarding offenses by the average person (Deut. 19:15). Given the nature of the pastoral role in the church, he should be given at least the same consideration when being accused.

Paul understood personally how people with less than righteous intentions can use gossip or false accusation to attack the pastor. He wanted Timothy to lead the church to ensure fair treatment of all believers, especially those responsible for congregational leadership.

**VERSE 20**
On the other hand, if a pastor were guilty of misconduct, he should be held accountable. The pronoun those refers back to the term elder in the previous verse. While pastors should not be accused without evidence, if the pastors sin the church should publicly rebuke them. Too often, churches are hesitant to conduct church discipline properly. When a pastor errs, the offense may never be known and he could simply resign and go on to another place where the sin might be repeated.

Paul encouraged the church to deal with leaders who sin in such a way that others will be afraid and avoid temptations. The goal was not to create terror among the clergy but to exercise warranted discipline in a fair and redemptive manner.

**VERSE 21**
Paul concluded his admonition with a serious charge to Timothy. This charge involved an earnest testimony before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels. Invoking the heavenly witnesses added to the importance of the matter.

Timothy was not only to teach but also to observe these things in an honorable way. The phrase these things referred back to the guidance related to the elders, particularly in relation to holding them accountable. As Timothy ministered among the churches in Ephesus he was to give attention to fulfilling Paul’s instructions without prejudice or favoritism. The first part of this admonition suggested Timothy take care not to prejudge any individual or any matter. On the other hand, when dealing with pastoral accountability, no one should show favoritism. Sometimes a minister may do wrong but avoid being held accountable because he is popular or held in favor by influential members of the congregation. Neither Timothy nor the church had the luxury of treating pastors differently based on personal preferences.

Provision for ministers not only includes appropriate financial compensation but also support spiritually and in other ways. Even when pastors misbehave, the church’s response should be done properly for the sake of the office and the redemption of the individual.

How can your church provide for its ministers in a way that fulfills Christ’s mission in your community?
FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

**WELCOME:** As the group arrives, ask people to name memorable families from television or movies. After you have listed several on a board, ask: *Are there any of these families that you would have liked to join? Why or why not?*

**DISCUSS:** Point out that families aren’t made up of perfect people and neither is the church. Invite the group to discuss whether they agree or disagree with the expectation that the church can function with less conflict than a typical family.

**DECLARE:** To run smoothly, a family needs mutual respect among its members. While we may not have experienced this ideal in our own families, we can understand its importance. In providing instructions on how to treat fellow believers, those in need, and those in leadership within the church, Paul compared the church to a family.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read 1 Timothy 5:1-2. Encourage the group to pay attention to how Paul avoided a one-size-fits-all approach to ministry.

**ANALYZE:** Guide in listing the different groups referenced in these verses. Ask them to consider what they’ve already learned about Timothy and the city of Ephesus through the study of 1 Timothy. Use Pack Item 2 (*Outlines of 1,2 Timothy; Titus*) and Pack Item 10 (*Handout: Timothy: A Snapshot*) as references for what you’ve already studied. Ask: *How might Timothy’s background have impacted his ministry to each of the groups listed in these verses?* The group may refer to the PSG under Verses 1-2 (p. 48) for help answering.

**DISCUSS:** *How does the way we approach a person impact his or her willingness to listen? How can a person balance sternness and love?* (PSG, p. 49)

**TRANSITION:** Assert that people have a responsibility for caring for those in their family. *In the following verse, Paul explained how this responsibility applied to both the traditional family and to the church family when it came to caring for widows.*

**HIGHLIGHT:** Direct the group to the following sentence in the PSG (p. 49): *Although our English word widow refers to a woman whose husband has died, the Greek word for widow describes a woman who may have lost her husband by death, incarceration, or desertion.*

**INSTRUCT:** As a volunteer reads 1 Timothy 5:3-8, direct the group to consider how this expanded definition of *widow* impacts their understanding of these verses.

**EVALUATE:** Paul outlined requirements for which widows should receive support from the church. Direct the group to evaluate their agreement with the following sentences in the PSG: *Paul was establishing the case for discernment and wisdom in utilizing church resources for widows. To support a widow who clearly traveled the path of self-indulgence would not only represent unwise stewardship, it would also enable the widow to continue in her sin* (PSG, p. 50). Ask: *How can the leadership of the church determine the best use of resources while also extending grace and mercy to those in need?*
EMPHASIZE: Point to Pack Item 6 (Key Verse: 2 Timothy 2:15). Note that church leaders are accountable for their actions and must seek God’s Word for their decisions.

STUDY: Direct the group to form small teams and examine the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 51) for further understanding of the treatment of widows and church benevolence.

DISCUSS: Why did Paul place primary responsibility for widow care on the children and grandchildren of the widow rather than the church? From the PSG (p. 51): Where is the line between family expectations and church responsibility? How can they partner in a way that is fair to both?

READ: As a volunteer reads 1 Timothy 5:17-21, direct the group to note the places where Paul referred to Scripture, quoting the Old Testament or citing a teaching of Jesus.

LEAD: These verses focus on care for pastors. How did your responses to the question on page 52 of the PSG change from when you first read it this past week to hearing it read aloud today?

EXAMINE: Paul discussed three areas of care for our pastors: financial support and respect; rejection of unsupported accusations; rebuke and fair discipline for supported accusations. Use information from your study of verses 19-21 for clarification (pp. 58–59; PSG, pp. 52–53).

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

REVIEW: Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 7:12. Guide the group in locating places this teaching is illustrated throughout Paul’s instructions in 1 Timothy 5.

RESPOND: Present the Key Doctrine found on page 49 of the PSG (The Christian and the Social Order): All Christians should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick (Col. 3:12-17). Allow time for silent reflection. Encourage the group to prayerfully consider where God is calling them to provide for someone in need.

CHALLENGE: Direct the group to the third question set under In My Context in the PSG (p. 54): Memorize 1 Timothy 5:25. Consider ways you express gratitude and generosity to your pastoral leaders. What actions do you need to take to encourage your pastor and church leaders?

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God for the godly leadership of your church. Ask God to encourage and protect them in their good works.
PRACTICE

- Care for pastors includes financial support. What is your attitude toward tithing? If necessary, ask God to work on your heart in this area.
- Prayerfully ask God for continued energy in leading the group for His glory.
- Consider 1 Timothy 5:25. Are there people in the group whom you can encourage for the good works they are doing? Reach out to them this week.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)
For further understanding of the metaphor of the church as a family, read the first paragraph in the PSG on page 46. Invite the group to discuss ways the church is like a family.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

- Complete the following exercise to help visualize the relationships suggested by Paul. Invite someone to sketch a family tree on a board and fill it out for Timothy based on the church family as outlined in 1 Timothy 5:1-2. Guide the group in suggesting words to write next to each family member that describe respectful ways of treating them. You can show an example of a family tree for further guidance.
- For further understanding of the care of widows, invite someone to read James 1:27 and Psalm 68:4-6. Guide the group in comparing these verses with the instructions given in 1 Timothy 5. Ask: What do these verses reveal about God’s heart? How does the gospel in our lives impact our understanding of care for the outcast and oppressed? Refer to Ephesians 2:12-13.
- For further discussion of 1 Timothy 5:19-21 consider the following: What factors may make a pastor or church leader an easy target for a false accusation? How can a church practice the actions called for by Paul? (PSG p. 53)

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)
Direct the group to the first question set under In My Context in the PSG (p. 54): As a group, identify principles from today’s study for addressing each other over sensitive matters. What actions need to be implemented as a result of this discussion?

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA
Direct the group to individually write a paraphrase of John 13:34-35. Then listen to or sing “They’ll Know We Are Christians,” by Peter Scholtes. The song was inspired by Jesus’ command in John 13:34-35, which reminds believers that the way we treat each other serves as a witness of our faith to non-believers.
Believers should be motivated by the value of living a godly life as opposed to material gain.

1 TIMOTHY 6:6-19

MEMORY VERSE: 1 TIMOTHY 6:10

READ 1 Timothy 6:3-21, First Thoughts (p. 64), and Understand the Context (p. 64) to gain an understanding into the importance of discussing wealth and the dangers of materialism.

STUDY 1 Timothy 6:6-19, using Explore the Text on pages 65–69. Pay attention to how Paul wrote about material wealth versus spiritual wealth. Review the outline of 1 Timothy (p. 12) for an understanding of overall themes of the book.

PLAN the group time using ideas under Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 70–71). Tailor the plans for your group using More Ideas (p. 72) and ideas included online at Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploretheBible/Adults. Consider how you will wrap up this study of 1 Timothy and encourage your group to pursue godliness.

GROW with other group leaders at the Groups Ministry blog (LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry).

GATHER the following items: Personal Study Guides. Prepare to display the following Pack Items: PACK ITEM 2 (Outlines of 1,2 Timothy; Titus); and PACK ITEM 6 (Key Verse: 2 Timothy 2:15). For More Ideas (p. 72): Paper and pens for each group member.
**FIRST THOUGHTS**

Most of us got our first job not because we wanted that job but because we wanted the paycheck that came with it. It wasn’t a career choice but something we could do until we found a job that promised a bigger paycheck. There is nothing wrong with wanting a job that pays well. The problem is knowing how to define “pays well.” Money is a useful servant but must not become a master over our thoughts and actions.

*(In PSG, p. 55)* What was your first job? What did you like most about it? Would you want to do that kind of work again? Explain.

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**UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT**

1 TIMOTHY 6:3-21

From the first chapter of this letter, Paul wove together the twin messages of right belief and right behavior. In the immediate context, Paul focused on materialistic versus spiritual values. Just as he addressed the problem of false teachers at the beginning of the letter, he continued that theme as he moved to the application of doctrine to believers’ attitudes regarding money. Paul believed selfish attitudes toward wealth were tied to arrogant distortion of Christ’s teachings. People who wanted to justify materialistic values could not do so without twisting the truth.

Paul knew the same people who rejected sound doctrine often did so from selfish desires. Some of the individuals opposing Christ’s teachings had self-seeking motives. They tried to equate godliness with material success, much like proponents of today’s prosperity gospel. Timothy should rebuke these false teachers and teach the church a proper approach to material matters.

Paul identified the issue not so much as the possession of wealth but rather the love of money. Paul spoke of materialistic values at the beginning of chapter 6, and he closed the chapter by addressing individuals in the church who were blessed with affluence. He acknowledged that rich people could be faithful believers. They should recognize God was the source of whatever they had. They should use their possessions to honor the Lord and minister to the needy.

In the middle of this discussion, Paul digressed to apply these principles to Timothy personally. Timothy should commit himself continually to trust and serve Christ. Doing so meant to flee worldly temptations that might deter him from faithfulness. At the same time, Paul urged Timothy to follow after the positive qualities of godliness. Timothy could find encouragement by knowing the Lord would bring everything to pass as Timothy trusted and yielded to Him.

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**KEY DOCTRINE**

*Stewardship*

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him (Deut. 8:18).

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**BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR**


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**BIBLE SKILL**

Review a parable of Jesus on the same subject.

Read about Jesus’ encounter with the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-22). What were the differences found in 1 Timothy 6 and James 5:1-5? What guidance do these Scriptures provide? What adjustments might a believer need to consider to live out these passages?
EXPLORE THE TEXT

TRUE CONTENTMENT (1 TIM. 6:6-10)

VERSES 6-8
Paul issued a warning against greed and depending on one’s wealth for security. He reminded Timothy that true contentment can only be found in godliness. The word but contrasts his next statement with what he had written previously regarding those who “imagine that godliness is a way to material gain” (v. 5). These depraved persons had deviated from the sound teachings of Christ in pursuit of personal wealth.

In verse 3 Paul equated teachers of false doctrine with people who rejected proper teaching about godliness. They sought to give legitimacy to their materialistic values (v. 5). Paul reminded Timothy that true gain lies not with one’s affluence but by being contented with godliness.

The term godliness involves an attitude that focuses on God and results in a devout life. Paul had already written about the importance of godliness several times in this epistle. (See 2:2; 3:16; 4:7,8; and 5:4.) He also used the term in 6:11. He wanted the church to understand that the proper goal in life was not one’s financial status but a right relationship with God.

The biblical view of contentment is quite different from the Stoic concept of accepting whatever comes one’s way as inevitable and unchangeable. Paul equated contentment with godliness. Believers can be content with a life focused on the Lord. We view whatever we have materially as being received from God’s hand. As such, we can be at peace.

Paul’s statement in verse 7 could be a paraphrase of Job 1:21. The first half acknowledges that everything we have has come from God because we brought nothing into the world. Even life itself is a gift from the Lord.

VERSES 9-10
9 But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction.
10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Many people wrongly equate success with having a certain standard of living.

Some people spend their lives trying to amass wealth and possessions. Many people wrongly equate success with having a certain standard of living. Paul reminded Timothy that having food and clothing was sufficient. Anything else was a blessing but unnecessary. Therefore, believers should be content with these, meaning the basic necessities of life.

Paul’s words echo Jesus’ message in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus specifically pointed to these two issues of food and clothing. Christ taught His followers to seek first God’s kingdom, trusting the Father to provide their daily needs (Matt. 6:25-34).

VERSES 9-10
Notice the contrast between those who are content with God’s provision versus those who want to be rich. The emphasis is on their desires. Paul was not denouncing people who had been blessed materially, but he wanted believers not to fall into temptation by having wealth as their goal in life.
The lust for affluence is a trap. Paul used a word picture that portrays persons who lust for wealth as falling into a snare much like a wild animal being trapped as it pounces on the bait. Instead of finding fulfillment, they are taken captive by their many foolish and harmful desires. They are slaves to their lusts, always wanting more and never being satisfied.

Notice the three parallel terms: temptation, trap, and desires. While each word has attributes distinct from the others, they lead to the same result: ruin and destruction. These twin terms repeat similar meanings to emphasize the devastation that these people will experience. This statement does not mean that people who pursue riches will not gain much material wealth or that they will fail in business. Instead, they lose spiritually. Having gained the whole world, they miss what is most important. (See Matt. 16:26.)

Paul did not denounce money itself; the love of money is the problem. A materialistic value system creates a desire for financial gain that is a root of all kinds of evil. Paul did not list examples but merely recognized the wide range of sins associated with greed.

Some people experience a craving for wealth. The word craving connotes reaching out with strong desire to take something. Even believers can fall prey to this lure. After previously being a steadfast companion, love for the world eventually led Demas to forsake Paul (2 Tim. 4:10). Like Demas, some people who crave money had wandered away from the faith. Paul did not mean they had lost their salvation. Rather, they were like sheep who wandered away from the shepherd as they sought greener pastures. These believers followed their desires into unfruitful lives. Instead of finding contentment, they ended up restless and wounded.

Instead of falling into such deception, believers can find purpose and contentment by pursuing godliness. Focusing on the kingdom of God and His righteousness, we can be at peace knowing He will provide all we really need. (See Matt. 6:33.)

If someone examined your calendar and checkbook, what kind of values would be revealed?

VERSE 11
11 But you, man of God, flee from these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.

TRUE RICHES (1 TIM. 6:11-16)

VERSE 11
Paul used the word but to contrast Timothy with the materialistic people described in the previous verses. While those persons were motivated by greed, Paul knew Timothy was a man of God. Perhaps no greater compliment could be paid than to be known as a person who belongs to God. Although Timothy was still relatively young, his devotion to the Lord had gained the respect of Paul and the church.

Paul encouraged Timothy to flee from these things, referring back to the cravings for money that trapped other people. Certainly this phrase could be applied to many temptations, including sexual enticements, but
the context focuses on materialistic desires. The word *flee* pictures someone running away to escape danger.

Not only should Timothy flee desires that could destroy him, Paul wanted him to *pursue* positive qualities that would build him up. Timothy should seek godly characteristics with the same intensity that he should take flight from sinful ones. Paul did not try to give an exhaustive list of character traits but offered six important ones that characterize a godly person.

The first three qualities describe one’s relationship with God. **Righteousness** is not the self-righteous arrogance of people who believed they merited God’s favor because they follow religious rules. True righteousness is bestowed by God through faith in Christ. (See Phil. 3:9; Rom. 3:22.). Similarly, **godliness** is not the personal piety of the law-keeper, but a heart that desires to please God. Both qualities require **faith**, sincere trust in God demonstrated by obedience.

The second group of qualities focuses on Timothy’s relationship with other people. To **love** with God’s love begins with receiving the love of Christ and allowing that love to flow to others. **Endurance** applies to the believer’s perseverance in difficult circumstances. Finally, Christians should seek to be known for **gentleness**. This characteristic should not be mistaken as weakness but the strength to deal with others humbly rather than harshly.

**VERSE 12**

Timothy should also *fight the good fight of the faith*. The word for *fight* means to strive or contend with diligence. The term suggested an imagery from athletics, similar to usage in other epistles. (See 1 Cor. 9:25; Col. 1:29.) This was a good fight, worthy of commitment.

Similarly, Timothy should *take hold of eternal life*. Paul was not saying Timothy was not saved. He wanted the young preacher to live with an eternal perspective as he resisted the false teachers and led the church.

Timothy already *made a good confession* of his salvation. He was not timid about his profession of faith but made it *in the presence of many witnesses*. He was not boastful but grateful for the life he had received in Christ.

**VERSES 13-14**

Paul charged Timothy with a strong admonition. He again invoked the heavenly witnesses of **God** and **Christ Jesus**. In using this familiar formula, Paul was not emphasizing the distinctiveness of the two, as if Jesus were not equal with the Father. Instead, he used these designations to appeal to these two Persons of the Godhead.

Paul referred to God as the One **who gives life to all**. Paul also made the point that Jesus **gave a good confession before Pontius Pilate**. This dual reference built on what Paul had previously said about Timothy in verse 12. Timothy could not have eternal life had it not been given by God through Christ. Similarly, Timothy’s profession was preceded by that of Jesus who did not shy away from His declaration of truth even when confronted by a powerful opponent.

Paul charged Timothy to **keep this command**. By *command*, Paul was referencing the previous statements regarding Timothy’s faithfulness in verses 11 and 12. This was not a suggestion. Paul earnestly called Timothy
to take this admonition seriously. The phrase *without fault or failure* further emphasized the fidelity Paul expected from Timothy. The first term emphasized the moral nature of his charge while the second focused on the need to live beyond reproach or criticism.

Paul did not necessarily expect Timothy to live *until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The early church expected Christ to return at any moment. However, this phrase meant that Timothy should carry out the command for the rest of his life. He was to persevere faithfully regardless of the circumstances or consequences.

**VERSES 15-16**

15 God will bring this about in his own time. He is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, 16 who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see, to him be honor and eternal power. Amen.

**VERSES 15-16**

God would bring about the Second Coming in his own time. Paul was content to trust God. He alone is *the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords.* This three-fold appellation emphasized God’s sovereignty over all things, including the timing of Christ’s return.

Continuing the exaltation of God, Paul rose higher in eloquent descriptions of His glory. Unlike any other, God is *alone is immortal.* Only God is without beginning or ending. He also lives in unapproachable light. This description did not mean God is not approachable; otherwise we would have no hope of effective prayer or communion. Rather, this phrase emphasized God’s holiness. In Him is light and no darkness at all. (See 1 John 1:5.)

*No one has seen or can see* God, but He has revealed Himself in the Son. (See John 1:18; 1 John 4:12.) When Moses wanted to see God, he was told that no human could see the face of God and live (Ex. 33:20).

This doxology reflects the adoration of God with which Paul began this epistle (1 Tim. 1:17). Paul continually found himself overwhelmed by the majesty of God. He closed his praise with ascribing to God *honor and eternal power.* God is worthy of worship, and He alone has everlasting authority. The exultant *Amen* was not merely the benediction of a prayer but a glorious cry that what was been said is true.

**We can endure difficulties and opposition to our faith in the knowledge that our God reigns.**

Believers live in the promise of eternal life. We can endure difficulties and opposition to our faith in the knowledge that our God reigns. The life He gives us in Christ can never be lost. His power not only provides our life in Christ but preserves us as well.

**How does worldly wealth compare to the riches of God’s grace?**
Paul directed Timothy to instruct the wealthy believers to remember God’s grace and the responsibility that comes with it. The phrase in the present age distinguishes financial wealth as opposed to spiritual riches. These persons were not to be arrogant because of their material possessions, especially in relation to other believers.

Believers of financial means should focus their hope on God rather than on the uncertainty of wealth. Investments can be lost. Possessions can be destroyed or stolen. Only God is sure. Whatever we have has come from Him who provides us with all things. He gives us these things to enjoy, so we give thanks for His provision and use our blessings to glorify Him.

Believers should focus on doing what is good instead of on increasing their riches for personal pleasure and security. We should seek to be stewards of God’s gracious provisions. Our good stewardship over whatever He has put into our hands reflects our acknowledgment of God as the source and ultimate owner.

Real wealth is found in good works. Believers are to be generous and willing to share. A significant characteristic of first-century believers was their willingness to give financially to help others, even when it meant selling personal property to do so. (See Acts 4:34-35.)

Jesus taught that we should not focus our efforts on amassing treasure on earth but instead on laying up heavenly treasure that cannot be destroyed or stolen (Matt. 6:19-21). He knew the correlation between one’s treasure and one’s heart. Paul also encouraged believers to store up treasure as a good foundation for the coming age. He was talking about spiritual treasure based on love for Christ and for one another. Our love for Christ is demonstrated by our ministry to each other. (See Matt. 25:35-40.)

The phrase the coming age should be understood in light of the result of storing up spiritual treasure—to take hold of what is truly life. Some translations render this phrase “eternal life.” While the coming age obviously relates to eternity, we should not see Paul equating good works as part of gaining eternal life. Instead, these acts of love are reflective of hearts that have been transformed by Christ. In other words, believers are to use what they have to bless others. People who have been born again naturally will share with other believers who are in need.

In what ways do your giving patterns demonstrate generous stewardship of God’s blessings?
LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

ILLUSTRATE: As the group arrives, write Wealth at the top of a board, and then make two sub-columns, Spiritual and Material. Guide the group in discussing the difference between these types of wealth. Invite a volunteer to fill out the poster as the group lists examples or symbols of each type of wealth (e.g. material: expensive clothes; spiritual: patience).

DECLARE: Paul warned Timothy to flee from a love of material wealth and run after spiritual wealth.

DISCUSS: Direct the group to read the paragraph on page 55 of the PSG. Then ask: Do you agree or disagree with the paragraph? Would it be safer to just treat money as an evil and flee from it altogether? Why or why not?

TRANSITION: In 1 Timothy 6, we will see how living a life motivated by a love of spiritual wealth guides us in stewarding our material possessions.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: As a volunteer reads 1 Timothy 6:6-10, guide the group to underline words about contentment and discontentment/desires.

CROSS-REFERENCE: Paul wrote that “godliness with contentment is great gain” (v. 6). We can gain further insight into his meaning by reading corresponding Bible passages. Create two teams, assigning each a Bible passage: Hebrews 13:5-6 and Philippians 4:11-13. Direct each team to study their passage and discuss how this enhances their understanding of 1 Timothy 6:6-10.

DISCUSS: Guide the group to the following in the PSG (p. 57): Godliness and contentment are nurtured through simplicity. Ask: Why is material wealth often a stumbling block to godliness? Give examples to support your answer (biblical persons or other historical or modern persons).

ASSERT: Paul didn’t state that money is evil. Reread verse 10. Having money isn’t the same as loving money; however, Paul warned that loving money is a trap that plunges people into destruction (v. 9). Therefore, believers must be careful not to fall into this temptation. Ask: What signs in a believer’s life indicate that money is becoming an idol? From the PSG (p. 58): What does it mean to base your contentment on Christ? After discussion, ask: Did anyone share anything in the group today that impacted how you would respond to those questions now?

TRANSITION: In verses 11-16, Paul directed Timothy to pursue Christ instead of wealth and reminded Timothy of the supreme worth of God.

READ: Call for a volunteer to read 1 Timothy 6:11-16. Guide the group to underline the action words.

DISCUSS: Paul not only warned Timothy to flee from a love of money but also told him what to pursue instead. Ask: What are the dangers of focusing only on restrictions (what to flee from) and not studying what God wants us to pursue? How can guidance on what to pursue help a believer avoid temptation? Read Jesus’ words in Matthew 6:24 and guide the group in considering
how serving money prevents people from serving God, but also how faithfully serving God helps people avoid the idol of greed.

**EXPLAIN:** Ephesus was a center for the worship of the Roman Emperor. Paul deliberately contrasted the false worship of a human ruler with the true worship of the one true God. Guide the group in discussing the attributes of God highlighted in these verses. Ask: How does focusing on Jesus and His character help a believer fulfill God’s purposes? (PSG, p. 61)

**COMPARE:** As a volunteer reads 1 Timothy 6:17-19, direct the group to compare these verses to verses 6-10. Invite the group to discuss similarities and differences between the two passages.

**EXPLAIN:** While verses 6-10 warn against a pursuit of wealth, verses 17-19 give instructions on how to use the wealth one has. Both, however, warn against putting your hope and security in wealth instead of in God.

**DISPLAY:** Point to and read aloud **Pack Item 6** (Key Verse: 2 Timothy 2:15). Guide in a discussion of how believers can pursue wealth and honor God’s Word. Follow up by posing these questions and asking for explanations to each answer: Should a believer pursue a high-paying career? Should a believer work to be successful in his or her career? Guide the group in using 1 Timothy 6 to support their answers. Then discuss the following question from the PSG (p. 62): In what ways can a person leverage his or her financial resources to spread the gospel and strengthen the church?

**COMPARE:** To further understand the principles studied today, lead the group to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 62 of the PSG.

**SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)**

**SUMMARIZE:** Use **Pack Item 2** (Outlines of 1, 2 Timothy; Titus) to provide a brief summary of 1 Timothy. Call for volunteers to share one thing they have learned that has influenced their lives as a result of this study.

**REVIEW:** Create three teams (a team can have just one person), and assign each team a bullet point from In My Context (PSG, p. 63). Direct the group to discuss specific examples of how to live out their assigned point. Consider neighbors, family life, work, and so forth. Invite each group to share an example or two.

**CHALLENGE:** Direct the group to the second question set (PSG, p. 63), and encourage the group to prayerfully consider this challenge throughout the week: As a group, identify needs in your community your Bible study group can address with your resources. What actions do you need to take to address that need?

**PRAY:** Close in prayer, thanking God for all that He has provided the group. Ask God to direct your hearts away from a desire for wealth and toward a desire for Him.
PRACTICE

- Prayerfully consider the third question set in the PSG under In My Context (p. 63):
  What changes can you make to honor Christ so that your earthly resources enhance kingdom opportunities locally and globally?
- Contact the group to thank them for their contributions this session. Discuss plans for the next study and encourage them to continue prioritizing Bible study.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)
Pass out paper and pens. Read the following from page 55 of the PSG: There is nothing wrong with wanting a job that pays well. The problem is knowing how to define “pays well.” Money is a useful servant but must not become a master over our thoughts and actions. Direct the group to make graphs by listing dollar amounts on the y-axis (vertical side) and ages on the x-axis (horizontal bottom), then plotting points representing what they considered to be a “well paying” dollar amount at various times in their lives. For example, $5/hour when they were 16 years old may have seemed like enough, but that likely changed over time. Ask: What factors have contributed to your changing opinion of “well paying”?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

- For further discussion of 1 Timothy 6:6-10, invite someone to read verse 7. Ask: Do you think most people would agree with this statement? Do you think most people live like they believe this? Explain. Why is there often a disconnect between what we know and how we act?
- To supplement the study of 1 Timothy 6:11-16, direct the group to verses 11-12. Ask them to imagine an action movie as you read these verses aloud. What types of images come to mind? How would you describe the people in these imagined scenes? How can this impact your understanding of these?
- To enhance the discussion on avoiding a love of money, explain that hashtags on social media are often leveraged to draw attention to certain causes or movements. Create two teams and direct each to develop a hashtag that reflects the Christian ethic toward money and/or generosity based on 1 Timothy 6. Share your answers.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)
Assert: Looking to money instead of God for security and contentment is a trap that leads to ruin and destruction. When people do this, what attributes or promises of God are they doubting? As the group discusses, encourage each individual to write down any attribute or promise that stands out to them and then look up corresponding Bible verses this week.

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA
Remind the group that believers know their true treasure and strength are found in Christ. Listen to “I Surrender,” by All Sons & Daughters.
CONFIDENCE

Believers can have confidence in Christ in all circumstances.

2 TIMOTHY 1:3-14

MEMORY VERSE: 2 TIMOTHY 1:12

READ 2 Timothy 1:1-18, First Thoughts (p. 74), and Understand the Context (pp. 74–75). As you read, make notes of the ways culture fosters or impedes trusting in God as opposed to ourselves.

STUDY 2 Timothy 1:3-14. Focus on how Paul affirmed his personal confidence in Christ.

PLAN the group time using ideas under Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 80–81). Prepare to lead your group by praying for your own confidence in the faith. Tailor the plans for your group using More Ideas (p. 82). Also refer to QuickSource and Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploretheBible for other ideas. Plan to play the song “The Great Awakening,” by Leeland, as the group arrives.

GROW from the weekly podcast on Ministry Grid (MinistryGrid.com/ExploreTheBible).

GATHER the following items: □ Personal Study Guides. Prepare to display the following Pack Items: □ PACK ITEM 1 (Map: The World of Paul, Timothy, and Titus). Make copies for group members of: □ PACK ITEM 7 (Handout: 1,2 Timothy; Titus Time Line); □ PACK ITEM 10 (Handout: Timothy: A Snapshot); and □ PACK ITEM 12 (Handout: Paul’s Letters).
FIRST THOUGHTS

Whether subtly or overtly by media outlets, billboards, magazines, or corporate seminars, we are motivated toward a self-confident life. Yet God’s Word compels us toward a life of Christ-confidence. When we are most dependent on Him, He is most pleased with us. Confidence in Christ enables us to face challenges by His power rather than by our self-sufficiency. By relying on His strength we can make a difference in our world.

(In PSG, p. 64) Does our culture over emphasize self-reliance? Explain. How does our culture foster or impede trusting in God as opposed to ourselves?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

2 TIMOTHY 1:1-18

Second Timothy represents a remarkable change of tone from Paul’s first letter to his protégé. In his previous epistle, Paul urged Timothy to take a strong stand against false teachers who threatened the church at Ephesus. Between the two letters, Timothy apparently followed Paul’s advice but could have suffered such an adverse response that he may have toned down his preaching. Paul encouraged Timothy not to be afraid but to rekindle his gift of prophetic preaching.

Beginning his letter, Paul followed a typical formula in the salutation. However, he did not need to identify himself as an apostle to prove his authority to Timothy. Instead, he reminded Timothy that he served to fulfill God’s will and to proclaim Christ’s promise of eternal life. He also affirmed his love for Timothy as his spiritual son.

Just as Paul compared himself with Timothy in their battle for the gospel and their heritage of faith, he also affirmed their mutual suffering. He had determined not to allow his opponents to shame him into silence. Similarly, he encouraged Timothy not to be ashamed of Christ’s testimony. Paul reminded him that not only had God called them, but He would be faithful to them.
While many people had abandoned Paul in his distress, others made special efforts to help him. Similarly, Timothy might have to endure many opponents, but God would always be with him as he faithfully proclaimed the sound doctrine entrusted to him. Neither Timothy nor Paul had to rely on themselves but could trust the Holy Spirit who worked in them.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

HERITAGE (2 TIM. 1:3-5)

VERSES 3-4
Paul pointed to Timothy's religious heritage to encourage him to remain faithful. He began by expressing gratitude for Timothy while, at the same time, mentioning his own ancestors. Paul affirmed that he served God with a clear conscience even as his forefathers had done. This reference is interesting since Paul had not grown up in a Christian family but was raised under the strong influence of the Pharisees. Likely the statement meant that his ancestors served God sincerely, even though they predated Christ's ministry. The term ancestors could refer to Paul's immediate parentage in the same way that he appealed to Timothy's mother and grandmother. Another approach views the ancestors as the patriarchal forefathers, such as Abraham. Paul used his personal history to bring up Timothy's spiritual background.

Paul's prayer of thanksgiving for Timothy is reminiscent of his salutations in other epistles. (See Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2.) He prayed for the young preacher consistently—night and day. As he did so, he thanked God for him. Timothy had been Paul's companion, co-laborer, and son in the ministry. Their relationship was a continuous source of encouragement for both men.

Some time had passed between Paul's first and second letter to Timothy. They probably had ministered together before Paul was arrested and sent to Rome for his final imprisonment. We do not know whether Timothy said goodbye prior to Paul's arrest or later. In either case, Paul witnessed Timothy's tears as they bid farewell. Remembering the way Timothy had wept over the situation, Paul yearned to see him again.

The phrase I long to see you likely referred to Paul's anticipation of a visit by Timothy to Rome (2 Tim. 4:9,13). He knew he would be filled with joy by seeing his son in ministry again.

VERSE 5
Having introduced his personal spiritual heritage, Paul transitioned to Timothy's faith. Timothy's belief was sincere. Timothy's commitment to the Lord had been evident from the day he left his family to accompany Paul on his missionary journey.

Having met Timothy during his visit to Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium, Paul had heard many good commendations of the young believer. The son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father, Timothy became a Christian before encountering Paul. (See Acts 16:1-2.) His grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice were believers and had obviously influenced Timothy.

VERSE 3-4

3 I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, when I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day. 4 Remembering your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy.

VERSE 5

5 I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and now, I am convinced, is in you also.
toward faith in Christ. Nothing is said about Timothy’s father being a believer, but he did not hinder Timothy from leaving to accompany Paul. Paul mentioned Timothy’s heritage at this point to encourage him. Perhaps Timothy had encountered some level of self-doubt, possibly due to the opposition he had experienced at Ephesus. If he had fallen short of personal expectations, Timothy would be encouraged by Paul’s confidence that his faith was as firm as that of his mother and grandmother.

We can find strength from people who invest in us spiritually.

We can find strength from people who invest in us spiritually. If the way we meet challenges produces a sense of failure or doubt, we can find renewed vigor by being reminded that others believe in us.

(In PSG, p. 66) How is a person’s spiritual growth impacted by the lives of others?

GIFTED (2 TIM. 1:6-7)

VERSES 6-7

6 Therefore, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.

Dealing with adversity in church can be daunting for a mature pastor. Timothy was a younger man and may have responded to opposition in Ephesus with some level of fear. Paul reminded the young pastor to rekindle the gift of God. Referring to Timothy’s giftedness by the Holy Spirit, Paul challenged him to remain bold.

The word rekindle means to bring to flame again. It does not suggest that Timothy had lost the gift but that he needed to fan the embers and keep the fire of faithfulness blazing. Conflict has a dampening effect on a church and its leaders. It can lead to withdrawal and hesitancy. Paul urged Timothy to respond with renewed fervor not in the flesh but with the spiritual gift God had given him. The text does not specify what the gift of God involved. Some scholars suggest it refers to God’s gift of the Holy Spirit. All believers receive the Holy Spirit at conversion and are gifted for service. The gift could refer to Timothy’s gift of preaching, which would be consistent with Paul’s previous letter (1 Tim. 4:14).

In any case, we can know several facts: (1) The gift was a spiritual empowerment; (2) it was not a natural ability but had been conferred by God; (3) the gift resided within Timothy; and (4) it had been confirmed by the symbol of Paul’s laying on of his hands.

The laying on of … hands was a typical expression found in appointment for service. (See Acts 6:6.) This description should not infer that any spiritual gifts passed from one person to another but rather implied recognition and consent for service.
The opening of verse 7 introduces the reason Timothy needed to rekindle his gift. Rather than responding to critics with timidity, he should be bold. Paul contrasted the spiritual gift of God in verse 6 with the spirit of fear that Timothy may have been experiencing. The word *fear* can also be translated as “cowardice.” This emotion does not come from God.

Instead, God gifts His servants with the spirit of *power, love, and sound judgment.* The term *power* does not necessarily mean mere strength but endowment with ability to perform God-ordained tasks. Joining this word with *love* suggests the Holy Spirit does not give supernatural power to overwhelm others but to minister to them effectively and compassionately. Alongside this giftedness, God grants believers *sound judgment* to know how they should respond to whatever situation confronts them.

Believers can act boldly with the power of the Spirit working through them. We are enabled to minister confidently because of the inner working of God’s Spirit. God gifts us with whatever we need to carry out His mandate.

What are the dangers of relying on our own strength and abilities to complete a God-given task? How can one tell the difference?

UNASHAMED (2 TIM. 1:8-12)

**VERSE 8**

Paul declared his assurance despite being persecuted for his faith in Christ. He was Christ’s *prisoner,* meaning he was in prison because of his faithfulness to Jesus. His confidence was not based on his own abilities but on his belief in Christ and the power of the resurrection. Accordingly, he urged Timothy not to be *ashamed of the testimony about our Lord.* Paul’s admonition may suggest Timothy had responded poorly to the opposition at Ephesus.

Given Timothy’s affection for Paul, it is difficult to imagine why Paul had to encourage Timothy not to be ashamed of him because of his imprisonment. His follow up statement offers some context. If Timothy remained faithful to the testimony of the Lord, he might *share in suffering for the gospel.* Instead of shying away from that possibility, Timothy should embrace it. He could do so only by relying on the power of God.

**VERSES 9-10**

Timothy and Paul could trust God even during adversity because God had proven His faithfulness. He had *saved* them and *called* them. Notice Paul’s use of the word *us* to bring together their common experiences. Throughout this section, Paul constantly used the plural pronoun to identify himself with Timothy. They had received a *holy calling,* indicating both the nature of the call and its source.

In the economy of God, His *purpose and grace* were theirs before *time began.* The point of this eternal aspect of God’s work was not to focus on them but on *Christ Jesus.* In eternity past, God had established His plan of
salvation in Christ. That plan resulted not only in their salvation but also in their calling to proclaim the good news of Jesus to the nations.

What had been a mystery has been made evident through the appearing of Jesus. (See 1 Tim. 3:16; Col. 4:3.) Many people did not understand or accept Jesus as Messiah, but He was Savior for Paul and Timothy and anyone else who would receive Him by faith. The reference to Christ’s appearing included His divine birth, earthly ministry, and death and resurrection.

Through His victory over the tomb, Christ abolished death. Death is the last enemy to be abolished (1 Cor. 15:26), yet in Jesus’ resurrection it is an accomplished fact. This does not mean that people would not die physically prior to Christ’s second coming. Rather, it refers to spiritual death, contrasted to the life and immortality that Jesus brought to light. The gospel is the vehicle through which the life of Christ is revealed.

**VERSES 11-12**

Paul drew a direct connection between the good news of Jesus and his purpose in life. He did not choose the life that wound through several missionary journeys to his cell in Rome. Instead, he was appointed by God.

Paul’s calling encompassed many roles. As a herald, he proclaimed the Christ. He did not claim a message of his own but spoke as the Holy Spirit directed. As an apostle, Paul was sent out with a mission to bring the gospel to the nations. As a teacher, Paul used not only his missionary opportunities but also his epistles to educate believers in sound doctrine.

Anyone with Paul’s accomplishments should have been acclaimed. Instead, his ministry in the gospel was the reason why he would suffer these things, a reference to his imprisonment and pending execution. As Paul served the Lord, he experienced numerous imprisonments, beatings, shipwreck, and other perils. (See 2 Cor. 11:23-27.) Through it all, Paul maintained his bold faithfulness to Christ.

**Paul’s faith was not merely in a set of principles but in the person of Christ.**

Paul had no cause to be ashamed of his service to the Lord. His confidence rested not in himself but in the Lord. He knew intimately the One whom he had believed. Paul’s faith was not merely in a set of principles but in the person of Christ. By personal experience, he knew Jesus to be faithful.

As a result, Paul was persuaded of a singular truth: Christ was fully able. He was sufficient for all things. In this specific instance, He was able to guard what had been entrusted to him. The term translated entrusted to me can mean either a deposit that Christ gave him or that he had given to Christ. Both understandings are true, and in both the One who preserves the deposit is Christ. The phrase until that day looks forward to a future revealing of Christ at His return.

We can live with confidence knowing that Jesus demonstrated His power through the resurrection. His power works in believers who embrace their roles in God’s eternal purpose and calling.
What gives you the confidence to serve or suffer for Christ without fear of being ashamed?

LOYAL (2 TIM. 1:13-14)

VERSES 13-14
Paul charged Timothy to follow his example, loyally carrying the gospel to others and standing for the truth. He acknowledged that Timothy already had experienced a *pattern of sound teaching* from watching Paul. The Greek term translated *pattern* refers to a form or example.

Timothy had ample opportunity to observe Paul, absorb his doctrine, and learn from his model. Timothy was well equipped with theological truth and practical experience.

Some people express their faith with firm conviction but do so in a way that lacks compassion. As Timothy resisted the false teachers, he should do so in *faith and love* found in Christ Jesus. Jesus was both Timothy’s source and object of faith. Christ’s love had transformed Saul into Paul and brought Timothy into the forefront of missional ministry.

Paul repeated the term he used in verse 12 regarding the deposit entrusted to them. He charged Timothy to *guard* what had been consigned by the Lord. This verse is reminiscent of Paul’s closing charge to Timothy in his previous letter (1 Tim. 6:20).

Timothy did not have to carry out this commission in his fleshly strength but could depend on the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God lives in us. Repeating his inclusive approach, Paul returned to the plural reference *us* to remind Timothy that they shared the Lord’s commission and empowerment. The indwelling Spirit serves as our sentinel, guarding that which God has trusted to us.

**We are charged with delivering the gospel not only to our generation but also to the next.**

Many scholars believe what had been deposited was the gospel. As such, it is a *good deposit*. It also is a godly deposit, entrusted by the Lord and kept by His Spirit. Like Timothy, we are charged with delivering the gospel not only to our generation but also to the next.

**How do the presence and work of the Holy Spirit encourage loyal ministry in the gospel?**
LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

INTRODUCE: Welcome everyone to the group time. Direct everyone’s attention toward reading the paragraph on page 64 of the PSG. Ask: Does our culture over emphasize self-reliance? Explain. How does our culture foster or impede trusting in God as opposed to ourselves? Allow for discussion and feedback.

EXPLAIN: Review Understand the Context (PSG, p. 65). Distribute copies of Pack Item 12 (Handout: Paul’s Letters) and read the purpose of 2 Timothy. Say: Today’s study moves us to 2 Timothy and focuses on how believers can have confidence in Christ.

GUIDE: Use Pack Item 1 (Map: The World of Paul, Timothy, and Titus) and Pack Item 7 (Handout: 1,2 Timothy; Titus Time Line) to identify the time and events surrounding Paul’s writing of the letter.

TRANSITION: As we approach the letter of 2 Timothy and understand its context, we can begin to recognize how Paul sought to demonstrate the work of the gospel in believers, and it begins with how we learn to have confidence in Christ.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 1:3-5, as the group circles words that describe Paul’s thanksgiving.

EXPLAIN: A common characteristic of Paul’s letters were his introduction of himself followed by a prayer for the audience. In this case, Timothy, was the audience and Paul encouraged Timothy to leave a godly heritage for his ministry to the church. Give out copies of Pack Item 10 (Handout: Timothy: A Snapshot) and review Timothy’s background.

ASK: What impact does experiencing and leaving a godly heritage make within a family structure? From the PSG (p. 66): How is a person’s spiritual growth impacted by the lives of others?

HIGHLIGHT: Review the affection that Paul demonstrated for Timothy through his prayers for Timothy (v. 3). Ask: Paul demonstrated the value of investment in the body of Christ. How does the investment by others in our lives help us to model sincere faith? Call for volunteers to provide examples of specific people who have impacted their lives.

TRANSITION: Just as Timothy demonstrated sincere faith that came through the investment of prior generations, Paul encouraged Timothy to use his gifts to follow the Lord and keep the fire of ministry burning brighter.

READ: Emphasize that Paul wanted Timothy’s ministry at Ephesus to be stirred into a blazing furnace of godly leadership. Then call for someone to read 2 Timothy 1:6-7.

ASK: What are the dangers of relying on our own strength and abilities to complete a God-given task? How can one tell the difference? (PSG, p. 68)

EMPHASIZE: Review the Major Themes in 2 Timothy on page 68 of the PSG, focusing on the source of gifts and their administration in the church.
REVIEW: Discuss how the giftedness of believers begins at the moment of conversion (v. 7) and how all believers are responsible for the discovery and use of their gifts to benefit the body of Christ.

ASK: Why do we often fear doing what the Lord calls us to do? Allow for group feedback. Based upon these verses, with what does the Lord promise to replace our fears?

TRANSITION: Paul’s final word of encouragement to Timothy in this letter was for him to remained unashamed of the call to share the gospel.

READ: Direct someone to read 2 Timothy 1:8-12, as others note words or phrases that relate to the commitment Paul was willing to demonstrate in his life for Christ.

EXPLAIN: In Paul’s perspective, his suffering was part of his call to share the gospel. And the thing that made the suffering bearable was his reliance upon the power of God. Furthermore, Paul provided an interlude describing how we rely on God for salvation.

ASK: How is God’s plan for redeeming His creation tied to a person’s purpose?

STATE: Paul exhorted Timothy in verse 8 not to be ashamed. Paul wasn’t just giving Timothy a pep talk; instead, Paul was able to share his own personal experiences and knowledge that the Lord would protect him in pursuing Christ in his life.

ASK: What is the relationship between confidence in the gospel and one’s willingness to share the gospel? How does the truth of the gospel instill confidence in the believer? (PSG, p. 71)

TRANSITION: After we reflect upon our call to share the gospel, we also realize there is the need to take the gospel to the next generation of believers.

READ: Guide a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 1:13-14, while the group identifies the two commands in these verses.

STATE: Paul encouraged Timothy and the church not to get caught in things that can distract the church from sharing the gospel. Instead, he encouraged them to be loyal to Scripture and to the gospel.

ASK: Why is it so important for believers to remain faithful in sharing the gospel? What things get in the way of believers freely sharing the gospel with others? (PSG, p. 71)

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

REVIEW: The main point of our session was how we’re called to be confident in the gospel in all circumstances. The confidence we have comes from the godly heritage that has been provided by other believers, the gifts that are used to share the gospel going forward, knowing that suffering builds our confidence in the Lord, and then pursuing the call to hold and guard the gospel in its truth. Ask: Based on what you have heard today, what does confidence in the gospel look like in your life?

REFLECT: Lead the group to discuss the second question set from In My Context on page 72 of the PSG: Discuss as a group ways of encouraging each other to exercise their giftedness by the Holy Spirit. What actions need to be taken?

PRAY: Close by praying as a group for each other to be bold in sharing the gospel.
PRACTICE

- The focus of the study this week is about confidence. Email your group members and invite them to reflect on what may be their greatest fears in life and what it took for them to overcome them.

- In your personal preparation, consider how you came to know Christ and reflect upon the generations of believers who came before you. If possible, create a spiritual generational tree of believers before you. Be sure to affirm that believers can be influenced by family, but faith is still a personal encounter and not incumbent upon your family tradition.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)
For the Focus Attention section, enlist a group member to talk about something for one minute that they are passionate about regarding their work, hobbies, or family. Transition that Paul was passionate about helping Timothy grow in his confidence in Christ.

EXPLORCE THE TEXT

- To supplement discussion of 2 Timothy 1:3-5, invite group members to share testimonies of who was critical in the formation of their faith. Allow this to be a time to demonstrate that more than family heritage is our faith heritage. Share your own story as appropriate.

- To further enhance the discussion of Timothy’s godly heritage, note that the three generations Paul described helped shape Timothy into being someone who demonstrated sincere faith. Lead the group through the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 67) to see how the investment of Eunice and Lois compares with others who invested in their families.

- To emphasize the theme of 2 Timothy 1:13-14, encourage group members to read Paul’s writings in Galatians 1 that call for the leaders to discern about the gospel being shared among the people.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)
Call for volunteers to silently reflect on their answers to the third question set under In My Context (PSG, p. 72): Focus on 2 Timothy 1:12. What actions do you need to take so that you can personally declare this verse as well?

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA
Listen to the song “The Great Awakening,” by Leeland. This song discusses what happens when believers are confident in sharing the truth of God’s Word with others.
Focused

Believers can find strength for life’s hardships by focusing on God’s grace and the gospel.

2 Timothy 2:1-13

Memory Verse: 2 Timothy 2:10

Read 2 Timothy 2:1-13, First Thoughts (p. 84), and Understand the Context (pp. 84–85). As you read, note verses that support the following statement: Following Jesus requires us to look to future generations and how we invest as well as how we are focusing on Christ today.

Study 2 Timothy 2:1-13, using Explore the Text on pages 85–89. Identify factors that contribute to a hardship sharpening or souring a person’s view of life. Spend time in prayer, examining your life and how you have counted the cost to follow Jesus. Consider ways those in your group have done the same.

Plan the group time using ideas under Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 90–91) and More Ideas (p. 92). Also refer to QuickSource and Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploretheBible for other ideas. Take care to customize the plans to meet the needs of the group, and prepare to welcome and include guests.

Grow with other group leaders at the Groups Ministry blog (LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry).

Gather the following items: □ Personal Study Guides; □ Some Bible concordances and/or Bible dictionaries for the Bible Skill activity; □ Enlist an interviewer and someone in your church who has faithfully endured a hardship for the alternative Focus Attention on page 92. Prepare to display the following Pack Item: □ Pack Item 3 (Poster: Metaphors in Paul’s Letters). Make copies for group members of: □ Pack Item 8 (Handout: Memory Verse Bookmark); □ Pack Item 9 (Handout: Models of Church Structure); and □ Pack Item 10 (Handout: Timothy: A Snapshot).
**KEY DOCTRINE**

*God’s Purpose of Grace*

Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (John 10:27-29).

**FIRST THOUGHTS**

We all face seasons of disappointment. As followers of Christ we don’t receive an exemption card that allows us immunity from hardships and heartbreaks. The Lord assured us that we would face tribulation. He also promised that He would never forsake us no matter how menacing the tribulation. Every trial provides us the choice to focus on the problem or to focus on His empowering grace. The decision we make can make a difference between victory or defeat.

(In PSG, p. 73) What factors contribute to a hardship sharpening or souring a person’s view of life?

**UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT**

**2 TIMOTHY 2:1-13**

Paul’s letters to Timothy are both personal and instructive. These two qualities weave in and out of each chapter of these epistles. Within paragraphs, and sometimes in the same sentences, the letters move from church-related issues to Timothy’s personal life and ministry and back again.

Chapter two begins with a reference to the previous discussion about faithfulness. This serves as a transition to Paul’s encouragement for Timothy to remain strong. At the end of chapter 1, Paul described how he had been abandoned by people who formerly supported him. At the same time he was uplifted by others who made extra efforts to aid him. He shared his experience to identify with Timothy’s difficulties. Timothy was not alone in his struggle.

Opposition to Timothy’s ministry had taken a toll on the young pastor. Some elements of this letter suggest Timothy had become reticent about pressing important issues in the church. Paul was confident that Timothy would remain dedicated to God’s calling. He used several different approaches to encourage Timothy.

Throughout these pastoral epistles, Paul referred to his personal experiences of suffering and to those of Christ as a motivation for Timothy. Writing from prison, Paul described his travail to remind Timothy of the consequences for remaining committed to the gospel. Paul was faithful to his calling regardless of the cost.

Paul also reminded Timothy of Jesus’ anguish and ultimate victory. Christ experienced rejection and affliction from the people He had come to help. In the same way, Timothy could endure antagonism with confidence. While he might share Christ’s suffering, he would also share the Lord’s victory.
Paul also employed three metaphors to encourage Timothy. The examples of a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer address three different aspects of the Christian life. Together, these analogies illustrate the servant spirit and need for obedience while also promising a reward for faithfulness. Each word picture portrayed a character quality that Timothy should emulate.

Another emphasis of this passage involves expansion of the kingdom through multiplication of laborers. It was not enough for Timothy to believe the gospel and share it. He should be intentional in helping believers make future generations of disciples who would do the same with others. Perpetuating the good news involved more than mere witnessing. It required developing new believers’ spiritual lives so they can replicate themselves in others.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

FUTURE FOCUSED (2 TIM. 2:1-2)

VERSES 1-2
We can become discouraged when our focus shifts from Christ to our circumstances. Using the word therefore to link his previous comments, Paul moved Timothy’s attention back to the Lord. Regardless of the difficulty of his situation, the young pastor could move ahead in his ministry with the proper focus.

First, Paul wanted to reinforce his personal affection for Timothy. By referring to him as my son, Paul reminded Timothy of their long-standing relationship. While Paul did not lead Timothy to Christ, he had mentored Timothy throughout their journeys together. Second, Paul encouraged Timothy to be strong. At the same time, he affirmed that the strength needed was not in himself, but in grace. Finally, Paul reminded Timothy that the grace that sustains is found in Christ Jesus.

Having identified the power for ministry, Paul quickly moved to the purpose of ministry. Timothy needed to do more than to remain faithful or even to proclaim the gospel to others. Just as Paul was about to pass off the scene and hand over this work to men he had trained, Timothy needed to do the same.

The message Timothy had heard from Paul needed to be propagated. Timothy not only had learned the truth in private conversations with Paul, he had observed it publicly in the presence of many witnesses. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel and he wanted Timothy to share in bold ministry of the Word.

One day Timothy would come to the end of his work. Preparing for that inevitability, he needed to take what he had learned from Paul and pass it along to faithful men. Not only should Timothy preach to and teach the church as a whole, he also would seek out certain men who could be counted on to continue this vital mission. He chose them according to their faithfulness as evidenced by their participation in the gospel ministry.

VERSES 1-2
1 You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
2 What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR
Timothy was to **commit** the gospel to these trustworthy leaders. The term translated *commit* carries the idea of making a deposit. In the same way Paul had invested himself in Timothy, Timothy was to entrust the gospel ministry to others who would be able to teach others also. What many writers have called “spiritual multiplication” can also be understood as the ongoing process of disciplemaking.

Faithful believers invest in the lives of future church leaders. We are always one generation from a totally atheistic world unless we continue not only to witness for Christ but also to train the next generation of Christians. We can never be satisfied with current success but must remain focused on the future of Christ’s church.

*(In PSG, p. 75)*

**Why was it so important for Timothy to prepare another generation to lead? How is this strategy used today?**

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**MISSION FOCUSED** *(2 TIM. 2:3-7)*

Paul identified three images as symbols of the Christian life: the faithful soldier, the disciplined athlete, and the hardworking farmer. He wanted Timothy to consider the lessons to be learned from these occupations and apply them to his life.

**VERSES 3-4**

Paul did not offer gentle platitudes to comfort Timothy in the midst of opposition at his church. **Suffering** was part of the normal Christian experience. Jesus warned His disciples that just as the world hated Him, even so they would experience rejection and worse for His sake. *(See Matt. 10:21-25.)* Like Timothy, we cannot escape suffering but must embrace it and **share in** it as a **good soldier of Christ Jesus**.

The image of a soldier was familiar to the early church. Roman legions were conspicuous in most large cities like Ephesus. During times of peace, the soldiers’ regimen revolved around training for their ultimate purpose—warfare. Privations, injury, and even death were part of their lives. Paul urged Timothy to embrace the role of one who would experience suffering for the sake of Christ. His conduct and attitude ought to demonstrate the character of a **good soldier of Jesus**.

A soldier does not become **entangled in the concerns of civilian life**. Civilians may engage in business, marry and raise a family, or become involved in other aspects of independent living. A soldier, however, has a different focus. He **seeks to please the commanding officer**.

A good soldier genuinely wants to fulfill the expectations of his superior. He does not merely follow the letter of commands but endeavors to honor the intentions of his commander. In the same way, believers should not be distracted by the pursuit of personal pleasure but remain committed to pleasing God.
VERSE 5
A second metaphor for faithful Christian service is the athlete. Two assumptions about athletic participants involve their willingness to prepare and their desire to compete. Victory was recognized by being crowned, usually with a circlet of laurel wreaths. However, no athlete receives recognition unless he competes according to the rules. A uniform set of criteria guides the competition. All participants must follow these procedures or be disqualified. Similarly, Scripture is the standard by which all Christian endeavor is judged.

VERSE 6
Moving to the third metaphor, Paul emphasized the spiritual compensation of the Christian servant. Any farmer who succeeds in producing crops has to be hardworking. Lazy laborers do not make good agricultural workers. In Paul’s day, preparing a field involved pushing a plow behind an animal. Planting usually meant spreading seed by hand. Dealing with weeds and insects required diligence throughout the long months between planting and harvest. Even after a year of backbreaking work, a single week of bad weather can wipe out the year’s crop. Consequently, the farmer should be the first to receive a share of the produce. Similarly, people who are diligent in service to Christ receive spiritual blessings.

VERSE 7
Paul urged Timothy to consider what he had said. The term consider involved reflection. Spiritual understanding does not come from human intellect. Paul was confident that the Lord would give Timothy understanding. The word everything did not mean Timothy would receive insight into unlimited knowledge. Instead, by trusting God’s leadership Timothy could understand how to apply the truth of the gospel in his life and ministry, even in the face of opposition.

What helps you remain focused on Christ’s mission, especially during difficult days?

CHRIST FOCUSED (2 TIM. 2:8-13)

VERSE 8
Any hardship must be balanced with the potential of sharing the gospel. Paul’s command to remember Jesus Christ did not suggest Timothy’s memory was faulty. Rather, he wanted Timothy to adjust his focus. Instead of being distracted by his problems, the young pastor should concentrate on Christ.

Christ’s resurrection power enables every believer to share in His victory. (See Phil. 3:10; Rom. 4:24-25.) The power by which God raised Jesus from the dead effectually works in us to accomplish His will. (See Eph. 3:19-20.)
Timothy needed to recall Christ’s resurrection in order to strengthen his resolve as he led the church and resisted the false teachers.

Interestingly, after making the point of Jesus’ resurrection, Paul mentioned that Jesus was **descended from David**. Connected with the emphasis on Jesus’ resurrection, this statement was not merely a reference to Jesus’ parentage. The title “Son of David” was uniquely Messianic in nature. The resurrection was the culmination of God’s covenant with David concerning a King who would rule forever. Paul’s **gospel** included the promise and its fulfillment. Because of the gospel, Timothy could stand strong and boldly proclaim the good news.

Affirming the power of the gospel does not mean believers will never experience grief. Paul acknowledged that the gospel was the reason he would **suffer**. Paul had been **bound like a criminal** and was, even at that moment imprisoned and awaiting imposition of the death sentence. Timothy might ultimately face similar trials.

Although the messenger of the gospel might be **bound**, the **word of God** cannot be contained. It has the power for salvation of the lost (Rom. 1:16) and for strengthening the believer (Rom. 16:25). The gospel consists not of mere words, but is infused with the power of God’s Spirit (1 Thess. 1:5). Paul had already told Timothy that even his suffering was an expression of the gospel’s power (2 Tim. 1:8).

VERSE 10

Paul intended the gospel when he wrote **this is why I endure all things**. He had experienced hardships of all kinds. Instead of drawing back to safety, he continued to risk everything, even his life, for the sake of the **elect**. The term **elect** formerly addressed the unique relationship of God with His chosen people—Israel. Paul used it to refer to believers in Christ.

**God has chosen the proclamation of the gospel as His means to bring people to salvation in Jesus.**

Interestingly, Paul said he endured suffering so that **they also may obtain salvation**. Surely, Paul did not claim to be able to add anything to Jesus’ atonement so people could be saved. Instead, he knew that God has chosen the proclamation of the gospel as His means to bring people to salvation in Jesus. Paul was willing to suffer in order to spread the gospel to as many people as possible.

Salvation is found only **in Christ Jesus**. Paul often used the phrase **in Christ** to describe the source of the Christian’s faith and hope. God imputes His righteousness to believers through faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:22). Our justification by grace and our redemption are found only in Him (Rom. 3:24).

The phrase **eternal glory** could refer to the Lord, since all glory belongs to Him now and forever (Phil. 4:20; 1 Tim. 1:17). However, given the context as Paul wrote about salvation, **eternal glory** likely involves the blessedness believers shall experience as they faithfully endure suffering because of their commitment to Christ (2 Cor. 4:17).
Summarizing his trust in Christ's gospel, Paul employed a familiar technique. He appealed to a trustworthy saying. The first of four conditional declarations relates back to verse 10 regarding what it means to be in Christ. It connects believers' union with Jesus in death and life. Another aspect of the saying could relate to the suffering Paul and Timothy had experienced. However, the tense of the word died more likely indicates the way that, in salvation, believers have died with Christ to their old ways.

If in Christ we have died to our former lives, we will also live with him. The future tense of the second part not only touches on the aspect of eternity in the previous verse but also to the state of life we enjoy in Him now. The statement mirrors Paul's encouragement to the Roman Christians in Romans 6:8.

The second condition relates to the believer's willingness to endure. Again, referring back to suffering for the gospel, Paul used the plural pronoun we to include Timothy with himself. The word endure literally means to "stay under." To endure means remaining faithful to the gospel task even when under the pressure of opposition.

Believers who persevere will also reign with him. Scripture promises victory to all who endure for His sake. Just as Jesus endured the cross and rose again to His seat in glory, even so in Him believers can share His triumph. (See Heb. 12:2.)

On the other hand, if we deny him, he will also deny us. Jesus said whoever denies Him before men will be denied before the heavenly Father (Matt. 10:33). The term deny means more than simply not believing; it carries the idea of disavowal. This statement particularly contrasts with the previous saying. The promise of endurance stands opposite the penalty of denial.

The final conditional expression takes the idea of denial a step further. The lack of endurance can lead to denial, which ultimately ends at being faithless. Still, even when we are at our worst, he remains faithful. While it is true that God remains faithful to us, this statement connects with the truth that he cannot deny himself. Therefore, His faithfulness relates to His trustworthiness regarding the gospel. He continues to pursue people with His loving mercy and truth.

Because of God's faithfulness, we take strength in knowing our faithful witness opens doors for the gospel to be heard and believed. By maintaining our focus on Christ, we can remain steadfast in helping others know Him.

(In PSG, p. 80) How does focusing on Christ's faithfulness to us help us persevere in faithfulness to Him?

VERSES 11-13
11 This saying is trustworthy: For if we died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; 13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.
LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

EXPLAIN: Begin the session by asking everyone what this old Bulgarian proverb means: “God promises a safe landing but not a calm passage.” Ask: What are some ways we’ve seen this to be true in our lives?

DIRECT: Guide the group’s attention to page 73 of the PSG and read the introductory paragraph and question: What factors contribute to a hardship sharpening or souring a person’s view of life?

HIGHLIGHT: Call attention to the context of the passage using Understand the Context (pp. 84–85; PSG, p. 74). Use Pack Item 10 (Handout: Timothy: A Snapshot) to review with the group of who Timothy was and the nature of the letter.

TRANSITION: Today we’re going to learn how God’s grace and the gospel help us face the trials of life and remain focused on living for Christ through all circumstances.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 2:1-2, while others listen for how Timothy should be strengthened.

EXPLAIN: Paul expected Timothy to depend upon all that Jesus could do through him more so than what he could do for himself. Ask: How do you define “dependence”?

STATE: Paul called on Timothy to pass on to others the things which had been taught to him, who will in turn also teach others.

ASK: Why was it so important for Timothy to prepare another generation to lead? How is this strategy used today? (PSG, p. 75)

TRANSITION: Paul’s next step was to encourage Timothy to remain focused on completing the mission for the glory of God for future generations.

READ: Direct someone to read 2 Timothy 2:3-7, while the group listens for how Paul viewed hardships.

STATE: From the PSG (p. 76): Verse 3 “conveys the idea of mutual participation in the pain and agony of another person. For Paul and Timothy, suffering for the mission of Christ was not an incidental matter. It was expected.”

EXPLAIN: The call to share in suffering is a way that believers are able to join where God is working to demonstrate His power and grace. Distribute copies of Pack Item 9 (Handout: Models of Church Structure) and highlight the various responsibilities of those in your church’s leadership. Note how each helps carry the burden of the needs of the church. Discuss ways your group can assist with those efforts.

ASK: Discuss each of the three metaphors Paul named in verses 4-6 and how they relate to suffering. (List them on a board, if possible.) Use Pack Item 3 (Poster: Metaphors in Paul’s Letters) to show how this was a common practice for Paul—using vocations and other
real-life examples to relate biblical truth to life. Ask: In what ways are the disciplines required to be a soldier and athlete similar? How are they different? How does the discipline of being a believer compare? (PSG, p. 77)

**COMPARE:** Use the Bible Skill (PSG, p. 78) to further the study of the word *endure.*

**READ:** Direct someone to reread 2 Timothy 2:7 to the group.

**REVIEW:** God delights in granting believers understanding when they desire to glorify Him. Receptivity to God’s Word creates the spiritual fertility for grasping and applying His truth in the confusing details of daily life.

**ASK:** In what ways could your vocation be used to illustrate the point being made by Paul?

**TRANSITION:** Paul challenged Timothy to remain focused on Jesus and His resurrection. He explained that any hardship faced must be balanced with the potential of sharing the gospel with others.

**READ:** Have a volunteer read 2 Timothy 2:8-10.

**EXPLAIN:** Remembering Jesus’ resurrection served as proof that He was fully God; remembering He descended from the lineage of David served as proof that He was fully man. Furthermore verse 9 reminds us that Paul saw the message of the gospel as something not to be bound. Then in verse 10, Paul counted the cost of obedience and remained faithful because the salvation of others was at stake.

**ASK:** How can opposition serve as a means for sharing the gospel? What are ways that we see people count the cost today to follow Jesus?

**READ:** Direct someone to read 2 Timothy 2:11-13, while the group circles the “if” statements in the passage.

**COMPARE:** Identify the four “if” statements from these verses and compare and contrast how they relate to keeping our focus as believers.

**ASK:** How does focusing on Christ’s faithfulness to us help us persevere in faithfulness to Him? (PSG, p. 80)

**TRANSITION:** Believers cannot always rely upon their strength, but they must always rely upon the strength of Christ and His faithfulness as their main focus.

**SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)**

**RECAP:** Review the bulleted statements from In My Context (PSG, p. 81) with the group. Ask if anyone shared anything in the group time today that changed the way they felt about maintaining faithfulness during hardships.

**REFLECT:** Lead the group to discuss the second question set from In My Context on page 81 of the PSG: Discuss as a group ways your group can minister to people facing a crisis of faith in your community. What one action can your group take to encourage them?

**PRAY:** Close in prayer, asking for the strength to maintain a faithful witness for others to hear and believe the gospel.
PRACTICE

• Find videos of people who have endured difficult circumstances and send those to your group as an encouragement to keep pressing forward and trusting Christ in all circumstances.

• Prayerfully study the attendance patterns of the group to determine if there are individuals who appear to be withdrawing from the group. Develop a plan to reach out to them with extra encouragement and grace.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)
Identify someone in your church who has faithfully endured during a hardship and, as a result, others came to know Christ. Enlist a group member to interview that person prior to the session, either by video (if they agree) or by taking notes. Once the group arrives, invite the interviewer to summarize the discussion or show the video.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

• For further discussion of 2 Timothy 2:1-2, look up and reference the example of the heritage of godly influence that led to Billy Graham’s conversion. Then lead the group to consider those in their lives who have invested in their spiritual walks with Christ and those whom they have in turn invested in regarding the truths of Scripture.

• For further insight into 2 Timothy 2:3-7, brainstorm further examples of vocations or activities that require endurance. Then discuss how perseverance in these vocations helps us understand how to persevere in godliness while facing difficulties.

• To supplement the group’s understanding of 2 Timothy 2:8-13, read Hebrews 12:1-2 and find commonalities between the writer’s encouragement and Paul’s in this passage.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)
Discuss practical ways that the group can encourage each other during times of difficulty. Encourage the group to memorize 2 Timothy 2:10 to use when they have feelings of doubt. Give out copies of Pack Item 8 (Handout: Memory Verse Bookmark) to those who need one.

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA
Play the hymn “It Is Well,” by Bethel Music, as the group arrives. Lead them to read the lyrics as a closing prayer.
Diligent
Believers find truth and direction by studying God’s Word.

2 Timothy 2:14-26

Memory Verse: 2 Timothy 2:15

Read 2 Timothy 2:14-26, First Thoughts (p. 94), and Understand the Context (p. 94). Note the different words and phrases used to encourage Timothy to focus on God’s truth.

Study 2 Timothy 2:14-26, using Explore the Text on pages 95–99. As you read, focus on how to be diligent as a worker for Christ. Reflect on the following statement as you prepare: One of the catastrophic consequences of word wars is the precious time and energy it wastes on useless arguments (PSG, p. 84).

Plan the group time using ideas under Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 100–101) and More Ideas (p. 102). Consult QuickSource or Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploretheBible for additional ideas. Consider how you might use the Suggested Music Idea (p. 102) with your group.

Grow from the weekly podcast on Ministry Grid (MinistryGrid.com/ExploreTheBible).

Gather the following items: Personal Study Guides; Everyday bowls and a special bowl; Bible concordances for the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 88); Articles on people who are diligent for Focus Attention under More Ideas (p. 102). Prepare to display the following Pack Items: PACK ITEM 3 (Poster: Metaphors in Paul’s Letters); PACK ITEM 5 (Poster: First-Century Heresies); and PACK ITEM 6 (Key Verse: 2 Timothy 2:15). Make copies for the group of: PACK ITEM 13 (Handout: First-Century Heresies).
FIRST THOUGHTS

Diligent. We use this word to describe a hardworking brick mason artfully stacking brick upon brick to frame a house. We see it in the sweat of a dutiful athlete who endures painstaking workouts to improve performance. Diligent is an adjective referring to conscientious and attentive devotion. We can also use the word to point to someone who refuses to give up. Paul reminded Timothy of the importance of remaining diligent as a follower of Christ. (In PSG, p. 82) Name some examples of diligence you see in the world. What are some ways in which diligence is needed in the Christian life?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

2 TIMOTHY 2:14-26

Paul’s point of view shifted abruptly in verse 14. After focusing on Timothy’s personal faith, Paul moved to how Timothy should deal with the false teachers. The apostle pulled no punches when he attacked the forces arrayed against the church. He did not hesitate to name individuals who exemplified people who had abandoned him and the gospel.

At the beginning of chapter 2, Paul urged Timothy to invest himself in the lives of faithful men who, in turn, would disciple others in a cycle of spiritual reproduction. Part of that instruction warned these church leaders about the pseudo-gospel and instructed them how to deal with the false teachers. One of the best approaches to teaching requires providing a good role model. As Timothy stood firm in his ministry of the Word, his charges would witness the courage and faithfulness they should follow.

We must look forward to chapter 3 to understand the context that provided such urgency in Paul’s words. His passion for Timothy and his concern for the church lay in the anticipation of perilous days. Their struggle would not only involve the latter days before Christ’s return but also the current antagonism of a worldly culture determined to destroy them. The church was birthed in a counter-cultural revolution against which the secular system would rage.

Paul’s love for his son in the ministry brought him back repeatedly to pointed pleas for diligence. Timothy received Paul’s charge to be conscientious in his handling of the Word and in his personal deportment. Not only did Timothy’s ministry require his faithfulness, but the well being of the church was also at stake. The vulnerable believers at Ephesus needed their pastor to show the way to follow Christ and to protect them in the process. This section of the epistle helped to provide a strategic road map for the preacher and his people.
EXPLORE THE TEXT

TWO GROUPS (2 Tim. 2:14-19)

Like Timothy, believers often feel the tension between a Christ-less culture and our commitment to Jesus. As we consider Paul’s instructions to Timothy, we not only gain insight into the dangers arrayed against our faith, but also we are emboldened to a diligent defense of the gospel.

We can learn from Paul as he directed Timothy to diligently study God’s Word in contrast to those who were distracted by worldly philosophies. Paul told Timothy to warn people against the danger of basing one’s life on something other than the gospel.

VERE 14

The pronoun them may refer to the church at large but more likely points back to the faithful men Timothy was to train (v. 2). The admonition to remind suggests new ideas were not needed but rather reinforcement of truths previously taught. The reference to these things included the fundamentals of the gospel laid out in verses 8-13 as well as the admonitions about staying focused on what really mattered to the faith.

Paul’s caution about how they should not fight about words harkens back to the opening of his first letter to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:3-4). Apparently, the false teachers had continued to engage members of the Ephesian church in debates that Paul termed useless. Pursuit of these ideas would result in the ruin of those who listen. The idea of ruin does not mean believers could lose their salvation. It might refer to Christians whose effectiveness was lost in the confusion of unprofitable debate. More likely, it included non-believers who were deceived by the false teachers.

The gospel enterprise cannot be undertaken as a hobby.

VERSES 15-18

To refute improper doctrine, Timothy needed to be diligent in studying Scripture. The gospel enterprise cannot be undertaken as a hobby. Understanding and teaching God’s Word correctly involves significant effort. Timothy was a worker in the Lord’s fields. God entrusted Timothy with a flock of believers. His primary responsibility was to use the Word of God to feed, guide, and protect them. If he were faithful, he would have no reason to be ashamed before the Lord.

Because of the importance of his work, Timothy had to avoid anything that detracted from the centrality of Scripture. Paul specifically addressed irreverent and empty speech. By irreverent the apostle meant profane talk that was disrespectful and blasphemous. The phrase empty speech translates a single compound word referring to speech that contains no substance. Not only are people who engage in such conversation not edifying, but also they hinder people who are trying to follow the truth.
Paul’s reference to *their teaching* (v. 17) infers the people described in verse 16. These people employed blasphemous and empty speech that opposed the gospel of truth. Paul likened false teaching to an infection that would *spread like gangrene*. If believers do not take diligent measures to avoid and refute such heresy, it will contaminate person after person, church after church.

Two examples of such false teachers included *Hymenaeus* and *Philetus*. Paul had warned Timothy about Hymenaeus in his first letter (1 Tim. 1:20). Along with Alexander, Paul had turned this evil person over to Satan because of his blasphemous talk. Apparently, Timothy had not been able to restrain Hymenaeus in the time between the two epistles.

We do not know anything about Philetus apart from this reference. As seen in the following verse, he and Hymenaeus were engaged in heretical teaching about the resurrection. Interestingly, in this second epistle Paul did not mention Alexander. Since Paul’s first letter to Timothy, Alexander may have left the church or died. Another possibility is that Alexander repented and broke away from Hymenaeus. In any case, Hymenaeus had found another collaborator in Philetus.

Paul’s indictment included the fact that these two men had *departed from the truth*. The doctrine of the resurrection includes anticipation of Christ’s resurrection and the bodily resurrection of believers who die. While Christ had experienced resurrection three days after His crucifixion, the resurrection of believers is a future event that will take place at His Second Coming (1 Thess. 4:16). This second application of the term *resurrection* was the crux of the heresy that Paul wanted Timothy to oppose.

The two troublemakers began teaching that the resurrection *has already taken place*. In essence, they misled believers into thinking that the issue of resurrection applied only to Christ and not to the future state of Christians. In doing so, they were *ruining the faith of some*. This phrase should not be taken to mean that people were losing their salvation by this doctrinal confusion. Rather, the word picture Paul painted suggests the controversy was upsetting their understanding of the truth.

**VERSE 19**

19 Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, bearing this inscription: The Lord knows those who are his, and let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness.

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VERSE 19

Thank God for the powerful word *nevertheless*. In spite of determined efforts to contradict the truth, the gospel remains *God’s solid foundation*. In his first epistle, Paul claimed that the church itself was part of that firm foundation as it championed the gospel (1 Tim. 3:15). Both analogies point back to Christ who is the foundation of the truth and of the church (1 Cor. 3:11). No matter what onslaught the enemy might make against the gospel, it *stands firm*.

An *inscription* might commonly be written on a prominent structure. In the case of God’s foundation, the *inscription* points to two primary precepts. Both are reminiscent of a Mosaic statement (Num. 16:5). First, *the Lord knows those who are his*. The reference in the book of Numbers refers back to the Hebrews who rebelled against Moses and, consequently, forsook God’s lordship. God knew those who belonged to Him and those who said they believed but whose lives belied their professions.
Second, the Scripture insists that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord should demonstrate his or her authenticity by turning away from wickedness. The faithful ones would prove to be holy before the Lord. Like Korah of Moses’ day, Hymenaeus and Philetus failed the test.

If we would avoid being led astray, we must continue to study God’s Word. We can stand firm only by diligent investigation of Scripture and faithful obedience to it.

(In PSG, p. 86) How does faithfully studying the Bible help a believer avoid useless and false debates? Can a person know the difference between empty speech and edifying speech without studying the Bible? Explain.

TWO VESSELS (2 TIM. 2:20-22)

VERSES 20-21
The various kinds of vessels in a house demonstrate the importance of being prepared for God’s use. Some of the implements were made of gold and silver, while others were wood and clay. Each had a purpose, but some had an honorable use and others were dishonorable. The distinction of honorable and dishonorable could simply refer to special versus ordinary uses. Yet, Paul used a word for honorable that means “precious,” while the term translated dishonorable means “shameful.” His point was that within the house, perhaps a representation of the church, some people fulfilled God’s purpose while others were not so faithful.

Paul wanted Timothy to encourage anyone who was engaged in dishonorable activities to purify himself by eliminating such elements from his life. Purification is two-fold. First, the blood of Christ purifies believers from sin upon their repentance from sin and faith toward Him. Second, believers participate in purifying themselves by removing sinful matters from their lives. As a result, they will be a special instrument, like the gold or silver vessels.

Paul used three descriptive words and phrases to describe why such an instrument is honorable before the Lord. First, it is set apart. The Greek word used here is the same one from which we get “holy” or “sanctified.” Someone who repents from sinful acts and attitudes and turns to the Lord is set apart from worldly matters and is set apart for God.

Second, such a person is useful to the Master. God will not use people who cling to sin. His Holy Spirit grieves over believers who live unholy lives. However, when we experience genuine contrition and ask forgiveness, God’s Spirit empowers us to fulfill His plans. Notice, the vessel is not useful in and of itself, but as it is employed by the Master. In His hands, we find purpose and value.

Third, the purified person is prepared for every good work. This statement should not be seen as a promise that godly people can do everything, but rather that the work of purification prepares them for
anything God wants to do through them. The concept of *good* does not mean intrinsic goodness but employs the idea of moral goodness as imparted by God. The works are *good* because they are accomplished by the Lord through His people who have been prepared through purification and holiness.

**VERSE 22**
Similarly, Paul urged Timothy to purify himself for God’s continued use. His admonition did not suggest that Timothy had succumbed to worldly temptations. Knowing the rigors of spiritual battle, Paul cautioned his protégé to be diligent in maintaining the right course in life. He used two contrasting images to make his points.

First, Timothy should **flee from youthful passions**. The imperative nature of the word *flee* demonstrates the urgency of this issue. Knowing the dangers, believers cannot play around with such desires but must take deliberate action to remove themselves from any temptation. Although some scholars suggest the word *passions* refers to immaturity rather than sensuality, Timothy was subject to the same physical drives as any other young adult.

Next, Timothy should **pursue** a lifestyle that would be godly and useful for the Lord. The four elements were not meant to comprise an exhaustive list of virtues but were examples of the kind of traits Timothy should seek. This statement calls to mind a similar warning in Paul’s first letter to Timothy (1 Tim. 6:11).

*By righteousness*, Paul meant the quality of being right with God. This kind of righteousness is imparted by God to believers through Christ. It is His righteousness that the Christian lives out in a way that honors God. (See Titus 3:5; Phil. 3:9.)

Similarly, *faith* not only is the means of salvation, it is needed in serving God. God’s righteousness and faith are wound intrinsically together. The just, or righteous person must live by faith (Rom. 1:17). This kind of faith endures despite temptations or persecution (Heb. 10:23,38).

A godly person also pursues **love** and **peace**. God’s love stands in stark contrast to the passions of worldly love. God’s love gives; the world’s love takes. God’s love seeks the good of the one loved; the world’s love selfishly fulfills personal desires. When believers love with godly love, they naturally experience **peace** with God and with other people.

The concluding phrase of verse 22 could apply in two different ways, both of which would be true. First, Paul may have emphasized that **those who call on the Lord from a pure heart** should also flee worldly passions and pursue godly virtues. A second approach would mean Timothy should seek these godly qualities as he serves alongside people who call on the Lord. In either case, the focus of this group involves people who (1) call on the Lord, and (2) do so from a pure heart. As opposed to carnal people, genuine worshipers seek the Lord with wholehearted sincerity.

To be useful in God’s work, we must intentionally flee sin and pursue righteousness. As we seek God with all our hearts, we will experience His righteousness, faith, love, and peace in the company of fellow believers.
What steps could you take to be more useful to the Lord?

TWO APPROACHES (2 TIM. 2:23-26)

VERSES 23-25

Returning to the theme of verse 14, Paul encouraged Timothy to avoid useless quarrels and instead to offer the truth of the gospel. He described such disputes as foolish and ignorant. The word foolish means the arguments lacked common sense and basic understanding. The term ignorant suggests a lack of education. Believers should reject being drawn into such debates. They only breed quarrels, causing dissension rather than edification.

Whoever claims to be the Lord’s servant must not quarrel. Instead, even while avoiding being caught up in these kinds of disputes, we must be gentle to everyone in the hope that even the opponents of the gospel will repent and turn to Christ. The person who serves Christ will gently teach people the way of truth. Helping people who initially reject the gospel requires us to be patient.

Verse 25 completes the idea of being able to teach mentioned in the previous verse. The result of Timothy’s teaching involved instructing his opponents with gentleness. Human nature pushes back against anyone who comes across as aggressive or antagonistic. Better results happen in ministry when we use kindness to teach God’s truth.

The ultimate goal is not to win an argument but for God to grant repentance. People will only come to a knowledge of the truth if they experience a change of mind regarding erroneous ideas they previously held. They will not arrive at a right understanding without help. Paul described a method for God’s servants to be part of leading unbelievers to the truth with love and gentleness, trusting God to work through them.

VERSE 26

Repeating an image from his first letter (1 Tim. 3:7), Paul used the phrase trap of the devil to describe the danger unbelievers encounter. The enemy sets his snares about unsuspecting people, taking them captive. Instead of following the Lord, they do the will of the devil. Their hearts and minds are darkened, preventing them from seeing the truth. (See Rom. 1:21; Eph. 4:18.) Believers are to present God’s Word with love and kindness so unbelievers may come to their senses and escape Satan’s snare.

(In PSG, p. 89) What are the benefits of a kind and gentle approach to communicating the gospel message? How does this approach break down barriers?
FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

INTRODUCE: As group members arrive, ask them to give examples of people who are diligent. Direct their attention to reading the paragraph on page 82 of the PSG.

ASK: Name some examples of diligence you see in the world. What are some ways in which diligence is needed in the Christian life? (PSG, p. 82)

TRANSITION: Last week we discussed the value of enduring for Christ and remaining focused; today we’re going to discuss how Paul reminded Timothy of the importance of remaining diligent as a follower of Christ, giving careful attention to remain faithful to the truth of God’s Word.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Call for a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 2:14-15.

HIGHLIGHT: Paul emphasized that there’s nothing worthwhile about verbal squabbling. Moreover, he indicated that those who engaged in it drifted toward ruin—referring to a catastrophe. Then, Paul implored Timothy to deliver God’s truth with forthright precision that cut through obstacles and made a straight line to the heart and mind of listeners.

DISPLAY: Direct the group’s attention to Pack Item 6 (Key Verse: 2 Timothy 2:15). Guide the group to explain the importance of this verse for the church.

ASK: If God tested the diligence and devotion of today’s believers to His truth in what ways would we meet His approval? Explain.

TRANSITION: Next we’re going to see not only the call to refuse to be ruined by words but also the call to be courageous with those who mislead with their words.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 2:16-19.

CLARIFY: Paul encouraged Timothy to put an end to the internal conflict the church was facing. Use Pack Item 5 (Poster: First-Century Heresies) and Pack Item 13 (Handout: First-Century Heresies) to give an overview of the false teaching that was occurring at that time.

ASK: How does faithfully studying the Bible help a believer avoid useless and false debates? Can a person know the difference between empty speech and edifying speech without studying the Bible? Explain. (PSG, p. 86)

TRANSITION: Paul turned the focus from the teachers to the call for the individual believer to be aware of how he or she lives for Christ.

READ: Call for a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 2:20-21, as you show everyday bowls and a bowl used for special occasions.

EXPLAIN: Paul used the illustration of two kinds of vessels in a house to emphasize the importance of godliness. The bowls were gold and silver and designed for special use while other bowls made of wood and earthenware served the purpose for ordinary occasions. Similarly, some believers honored Jesus worthily by their behavior and belief while others dishonored Him by their lifestyle.
GUIDE: Direct attention to Pack Item 3 (Poster: Metaphors in Paul’s Letters). Clarify the meaning of metaphor and call on volunteers to identify and compare each verse’s metaphor. Then ask: In Paul’s illustration about vessels in a house, what was the relationship between purity and service? Explain.

TRANSITION: A part of being a clean vessel is learning how to remove the influence of sin from the individual’s life.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 2:22. Then lead the group to share three honorable actions they heard in these verses with a neighbor.

EXPLAIN: Timothy’s discipline of fleeing and pursuing would find welcome company from others who called on Jesus from a “pure heart.” Fellowship with like-minded believers would help Timothy run away from inappropriate passions and run toward holy virtues. Moreover, it would inspire Timothy to be an honorable vessel, suitable for the Lord’s purpose.

STUDY: Lead the group to complete the Bible Skill on page 88 of the PSG: Use a Bible concordance to identify the passages in which Paul used the word flee. Note the audience and the action from which he directed them to flee. What, if any, common traits do you find in the things Paul directed his readers to flee? What would a person need to pursue to counter what Paul called for them to flee in each passage?

ASK: How are the ideas of “flee” and “pursue” in verse 22 connected? How does pursuing the things identified by Paul help a person flee ungodliness? (PSG, p. 88)

TRANSITION: The final call from Paul was for Timothy to lead the church toward purity.

READ: Identify a volunteer to read aloud 2 Timothy 2:23-26, as the group listens for character traits in these verses.

EMPHASIZE: Paul’s call to reject the fighting within the church was coupled with the exhortation to model three traits to minimize quarreling: gentleness, a teacher, and patience. Paul further emphasized that God was not unwilling to provide repentance, but the opponents might refuse to accept it. Therefore, Paul advocated a gentle and calm approach that corrected the error of the heretics and set free those who were prisoners in the devil’s trap.

ASK: What are the benefits of a kind and gentle approach to communicating the gospel message? How does this approach break down barriers? (PSG, p. 89)

HIGHLIGHT: Emphasize the Key Doctrine (Evangelism and Missions) on page 89 of the PSG.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

RECAP: Review the bulleted statements from In My Context (PSG, p. 90) with the group. Guide the group to silently reflect on whether there are areas in which they are being led astray that need to be addressed in their lives.

REFLECT: Lead in a discussion of the second question set from In My Context on page 90 of the PSG: Discuss steps your Bible study group can take to avoid unedifying conversations. Create a set of guidelines based on the discussion.

PRAY: Close in prayer, asking for help living out God’s Word to others with love and kindness.
PRACTICE

- Support the session by contacting your group members and encouraging them to remain diligent in their Christian lives.
- Prayerfully consider those you know who need to hear that despite the past, Jesus is always willing and ready to lovingly receive and forgive us.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)
Prior to the session, search online and print articles of people who are diligent. Create teams and give each an article to read. Allow time for discussion, and then call for volunteers to share what characteristics they discussed.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

- For further insight into 2 Timothy 2:14-19, reference James 2:12-13 for the discussion about the value of guarding the tongue in speech. Compare and contrast the two passages.
- To supplement 2 Timothy 2:20-22, reference 2 Corinthians 4:7-12 to discuss the call to carry the gospel as a vessel.
- To enhance discussion of 2 Timothy 2:23-26, go to Paul’s sermon in the Areopagus in Acts 17:22-31 as an example of how he called people to repentance using a gentle means. As a group, brainstorm common issues today that need a gentle reminder from a friend to change and how one should go about such a discussion.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)
Reread this session’s memory verse (2 Timothy 2:15) or point to Pack Item 6 (Key Verse: 2 Timothy 2:15). Review the bulleted summary statements under In My Context on page 90 of the PSG. Brainstorm practical ways to maintain focus on being God’s vessel for each of the bulleted statements.

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA
Play for the group the hymn, “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us,” by Stuart Townend. Emphasize how the song calls for us to remember God’s love and for us to show that love to others.
Believers must remain faithful to God’s truth even when facing persecution.

**2 TIMOTHY 3:12-17; 4:1-8**

**MEMORY VERSE: 2 TIMOTHY 4:7**

- READ 2 Timothy 3:1–4:22, First Thoughts (p. 104), and Understand the Context (pp. 104–105). As you read, underline the commands given by Paul. Make notes as to why Paul was so urgent in giving these commands.

- STUDY 2 Timothy 3:12-17; 4:1-8, using Explore the Text on pages 105–109. Identify ways to focus on finishing well in the race for Christ. What truths would you share with a friend facing challenges for his or her faith in Christ?

- PLAN the group time using ideas under Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 110–111) and More Ideas (p. 112). Consult QuickSource (available from LifeWay.com) or Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploretheBible for additional ideas.

- GROW with other group leaders at the Groups Ministry blog (LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry).

- GATHER the following items: Personal Study Guides; and For More Ideas (p. 112): Pens and paper for each group member; A copy of Nik Ripken’s *The Insanity of Obedience*. Prepare to display the following Pack Item: PACK ITEM 5 (Poster: First-Century Heresies). Make copies for the group of: PACK ITEM 7 (Handout: 1,2 Timothy; Titus Time Line); PACK ITEM 12 (Handout: Paul’s Letters); and PACK ITEM 13 (Handout: First-Century Heresies).
KEY DOCTRINE
*The Scriptures*
Scripture has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter (2 Pet. 1:19-21).

FIRST THOUGHTS
Humans can endure a great deal when they believe in their cause. They simply find a way to overcome obstacles. For some, the greater the obstacle, the more they flourish. Believers who have faced persecution demonstrate this same kind of resolve, knowing that the greater the opposition, the greater the opportunity to honor God.

(In PSG, p. 91) Why are some people able to endure rejection or opposition for their faith? What truths would you share with a friend facing challenges for his or her faith in Christ?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT
2 TIMOTHY 3:1–4:22
Timothy experienced personal conflict at Ephesus, and worse situations were to come. Paul urged Timothy to meet future difficulties with grace and strength. He also wanted future generations to recognize the spiritual sources of persecution and have the spiritual resources to endure.

Interpreting these chapters requires understanding Paul’s shifts in perspective regarding time. He often did not give clear signals when moving from the “last days” to Timothy’s present circumstances and then to the immediate future. In the opening verses of chapter three, Paul described people that believers would encounter in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1-5). Modern readers might view the phrase “last days” to mean the time immediately before Christ’s second coming. In many cases, New Testament writers used this term to describe the period between Christ’s resurrection and the Second Coming.

In 3:6, Paul returned to Timothy’s current situation. In the first five verses of the chapter, Paul used the future tense, but starting with verse 6 he employed the present tense. He alerted Timothy of the dangers that lay ahead. Paul wanted Timothy to watch out for people who were already exhibiting characteristics associated with the degenerate unbelievers of the last days. The best preparation involved studying the Scriptures. God inspired the Bible so believers would have all we needed to know Him and remain faithful to Him regardless of our circumstances.

The first few verses of chapter four also contain changes in time. Paul began by charging Timothy to preach the Word of God faithfully. In verse three, he gave the reason for why biblical teaching and preaching was so important. People would grow increasingly unwilling to hear the truth. This time shift addressed the period soon to come, although it would also apply to the more distant future.

BIBLE SKILL
Compare similar passages.
Compare Paul’s last testament with the closing statements of others: King David (2 Sam. 23), Moses (Deut. 33), the dying thief (Luke 23), and Stephen (Acts 7). What common things, if any, do you find in these accounts? What do these reveal about the importance of faith at the end of life on earth?
As he concluded his letter, Paul reflected about his own future. He would soon be martyred. Looking back on his life, Paul was satisfied with his faithfulness to Christ. Looking forward, he anticipated the reward Christ would give him and promised the same to all who were faithful to Jesus. In the meantime, Timothy could help Paul by bringing some personal items, especially copies of Scriptures, to Rome.

As usual, Paul ended the epistle with greetings and commendations for some friends, and warnings about people who had opposed him and the gospel. Yet, in all things, Paul was confident the Lord Jesus Christ would be with Timothy, as He is with all believers as they faithfully follow Him.

**EXPLORE THE TEXT**

**PERSECUTION COMING** (2 TIM. 3:12-13)

**VERSES 12-13**

Believers around the world today are threatened, harmed, and even killed for their faith. Paul told Timothy to expect persecution to gain momentum over time.

*Some believers may try to escape difficulties by compromising their lifestyles to accommodate society.*

Paul qualified the word *all* with the phrase *who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus.* Some believers may try to escape difficulties by compromising their lifestyles to accommodate society. Situations vary from culture to culture, but anyone who tries to follow Christ by living a godly life can expect to be persecuted. A godly life is made possible by the believer’s being in Christ. Paul often used this phrase to describe the union between Christ and Christians (Rom. 3:22-24; 1 Cor. 2; 2 Cor. 5:17).

Many modern readers may interpret verse 13 as referring to the period before Christ returns. While evil people and impostors will become worse, deceiving and being deceived.

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How does seeking to live a godly life lead to potential bullying and persecution?

GET EQUIPPED (2 TIM. 3:14-17)

VERSES 14-15
Regardless of how other people might behave or what conflict they might create, Timothy could remain faithful to Jesus. With the phrase but as for you, Paul contrasted Timothy from the evil persons of the previous verse. Timothy’s behavior was not dependent on his circumstances or on what other people might do. He had a solid record of serving Christ faithfully. Timothy did not need to change anything but to continue.

Paul’s reference to what his protégé had learned involved several sources of spiritual influence. Obviously, Paul had taught the young pastor. He had been Timothy’s mentor for years. In addition, Timothy had a godly heritage through an upbringing by his believing mother and grandmother. They had introduced him to the Scriptures and to Christ. Yet, Timothy’s was not a second-hand faith from those who taught him. He firmly believed. Paul encouraged him to stay true to the course he had chosen in Christ.

Timothy’s spiritual preparation began at a young age. Paul used a word that can be translated infancy or “childhood.” His mother and grandmother taught him the sacred Scriptures. These godly women were faithful believers who followed the biblical pattern of passing God’s Word along to their children and grandchildren.

Timothy learned that the Scripture provides all a believer needs to be equipped and used by God. The Scriptures contain the wisdom for salvation. Through the Scriptures, Timothy came to have faith in Christ Jesus.

VERSES 16-17
All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
Third, having called us to repentance, the Bible provides the method for correcting us. It helps get us back on the right path. The term translated correcting is a compound word meaning to “straighten up again.” God’s purpose in dealing with our sin always involves bringing us back to our original purpose of reflecting His image and accomplishing His will.

Finally, Scripture provides training in righteousness. The culmination of spiritual discipleship involves doing what is right according to God. God’s Word helps us mature as believers, not only in what we believe but also in how we behave.

The proper use of Scripture results in transformation of the man of God. In this immediate context Paul used this phrase to describe Timothy. However, the intention of this passage was not limited to Timothy individually but applies to every believer.

God wants each person to be complete. This word literally means “perfect” or “competent.” This carries the connotation of spiritual maturity as seen in the descriptive phrase equipped for every good work. Prior to glorification in heaven, believers will never be perfect in the sense of sinless perfection. Rather, this idea means Scripture provides everything Christians need to perform every good work God places before us.

Believers can trust the Scriptures as God’s Word. God gave us this divine book so we might know Him, believe Him, and follow Him.

(In PSG, p. 95) How does using Scripture for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness (v. 16) equip a believer for “every good work”? 

PREACH HIS WORD (2 TIM. 4:1-4)

VERSES 1-2

For the fourth time in his two letters to Timothy, Paul would solemnly charge the pastor. (See 1 Tim. 1:18; 5:21; 6:13.) The phrase solemnly charge translates a single word meaning to admonish someone seriously. Paul’s challenge was so important that he offered it before God and Christ Jesus. The fact that Jesus will judge the living and the dead adds weight to Paul’s charge. While Timothy’s salvation was established, how he fulfilled Paul’s directions would greatly influence others in their relationship with Christ.

Another reason for the gravity of Paul’s challenge involved the sureness of Christ’s appearing and his kingdom. The church anticipated Jesus’ return at any time. Scholars apply the idea of Christ’s kingdom to several applications: the church, believers through the ages, heaven, and Jesus’ earthly reign following His Second Coming. In the case of any of these interpretations, the implication for the ministry of the Word was significant.

While the previous verse established the seriousness of Paul’s charge, this verse dictated its substance: Preach the word. All other directives in this verse describe aspects of accomplishing this mandate. The term preach

VERSES 1-2

1 I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and because of his appearing and his kingdom: 2 Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching.
employs the idea of a herald who declares his Master’s message dependably. Timothy did not have the luxury of sharing personal preferences but was responsible for declaring God’s Word faithfully.

Knowing opportunities to proclaim the gospel often arose unexpectedly, the preacher had to **be ready** at any time, **in season and out of season**. Paul’s instruction immediately applied to Timothy but has meaning for all believers. Each of us should be prepared to share Christ’s good news at all times.

The nature of proclaiming the Word included actions in keeping with the substance of Scripture as indicated in 2 Timothy 3:16—**rebuke, correct, and encourage**. In both cases, the proclamation of the Word should be done **with great patience and teaching**.

### VERSES 3-4

Paul’s charge contained a sense of urgency because people would not always tolerate sound doctrine. Increasingly, people would allow their personal desires to decide what they want to hear. Instead of heeding a word from the Lord, they would seek to satisfy the itch to affirm their own cravings. Rejecting godly teachers, they would multiply teachers who mirrored themselves.

The reference to **myths** recalls Paul’s warning in his first letter to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:4). As in the previous epistle, these myths could relate to Jewish fables or Gentile superstition. In any case, they include everything that stands in opposition to **hearing the truth** of God’s Word. If people turn away from what is true, they will turn to what is false. Because of this ever-present danger, believers must be ready to present the true gospel at all times.

(师范大学, p. 97) What are some contemporary examples of “itching-ear” spirituality? How do those examples distort God’s Word?

### VERSE 5

But as for you, exercise self-control in everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Using the familiar phrase, **but as for you**, the apostle shifted from Timothy’s preaching responsibilities to his personal life and service to Christ. With four imperative statements, Paul urged Timothy to take actions necessary to his calling. First, Timothy was to **exercise self-control**. In other epistles, Paul used this term to implore watchfulness (1 Thess. 5:6). Responsible followers of Christ must restrain their desires, not only in areas of morality, but in everything.

Paul’s second encouragement seems unnecessary since Timothy had already been experiencing **hardship**. Paul urged Timothy not to give up in the face of opposition, but to **endure** it.

The third challenge required Timothy to **do the work of an evangelist**. One does not need a special gifting to carry out the work of an evangelist. All believers have the mandate of Christ’s Great Commission to make disciples of all people (Matt. 28:18-20).
As Timothy fulfilled these and other aspects of Christian service, he would fulfill his ministry. This phrase was an imperative necessity. Paul wanted his son in the ministry to realize the potential of his ministry.

**VERSES 6-8**

Paul pointed to himself as an example. He announced his resolve to finish his life well. Paul used two word pictures to describe his anticipated death. Being poured out as a drink offering referenced a sacrifice to the Lord honoring His holiness and goodness. Perhaps the first drink offering was made by Jacob at Bethel when God gave him the covenant name of Israel (Gen. 35:14). Drink offerings were regular parts of the daily sacrifice in the tabernacle and later in the temple (Ex. 29:38-41).

The fact that Paul felt he was already being poured out indicated his current suffering as his execution approached. The second metaphor simply alluded to Paul’s departure. An obvious reference to his pending death, Paul knew that his time was close. He was ready to meet his Lord.

Reflecting on his ministry, Paul made three triumphant declarations, not out of pride but from a sense of fulfillment. He had fought the good fight. Possibly a reference to his many battles with opposition throughout his ministry, this phrase could also encompass Paul’s overall spiritual endeavors. The important point was that it was a good fight. His was not self-serving effort but work that glorified Christ.

Another metaphor came from the athletic arena, similar to one already used in this epistle (2 Tim. 2:5). Paul was no longer in the race, he had finished it. He could look back as he was about to cross the finish line and feel satisfaction from a race well run.

Finally, and most importantly, Paul had kept the faith. More than having faith, this phrase addressed the faith, meaning the faithful adherence to Jesus and His gospel. He had not been deterred or defeated. He stayed true to the end and was victorious in Christ.

Paul knew a reward was reserved for him in heaven. The champion athlete received a wreath-like crown for his victory. Paul anticipated a crown of righteousness. He envisioned that day when the righteous Judge would grant him the culmination of both the righteousness that Christ imparted to believers and the rightly lived life that reflected that righteousness.

Paul did not claim this award for himself alone but promised it to all those who have loved Christ’s appearing. The tense suggests believers looked back on Christ’s earthly life and ministry with deep affection and appreciation. It also could look forward to Jesus’ second appearing. In both cases, the emphasis rests on Christ. As believers demonstrate the genuineness of their faith by remaining faithful to Christ to the end, we can also anticipate the ultimate commendation, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21).

What is the relationship between fighting the good fight and keeping the faith? Can you have one without the other? Explain.
LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

INTRODUCE: As the group arrives, share about a time when you experienced personal opposition for your faith. If you do not have a personal story, find an example to share. (Foxe’s Book of Martyrs is a great resource.)

ASK: Why are some people able to endure rejection or opposition for their faith? (PSG, p. 91)

STATE: Believers who have faced persecution demonstrate this same kind resolve, knowing the greater the opposition the greater the opportunity to honor God.

REVIEW: Read the main points from Understand the Context (pp. 104–105). During your highlights, direct the group’s attention to Pack Item 12 (Handout: Paul’s Letters) and direct a volunteer to read its purpose—how this letter was used to encourage Timothy in the faith.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 3:12-13.

DEFINE: Ask the group to define the difference between opposition, bullying, and persecution.

ASK: Why should believers expect this type of treatment? As followers of Christ, we are going to be different to the culture no matter where we are or what circumstances we face.

EMPHASIZE: Paul knew this truth personally. He understood the lengths to which nonbelievers would go to silence believers. Use Pack Item 7 (Handout: 1,2 Timothy; Titus Time Line) to point out Paul’s location while writing this letter (under the subheading “AD 62–67”).

ASK: How does seeking to live a godly life lead to potential bullying and persecution? (PSG, p. 93)

READ: Direct someone to read 2 Timothy 3:14-15, while the group listens for what Paul urged Timothy to do.

STATE: Timothy would have to guard against pastoral pitfalls and doctrinal deviations that could dampen his spiritual fire. As God’s truth took deep root in Timothy, his ministry would bear abundant fruit to the glory of Christ and equip him to tackle challenges at Ephesus.

ASK: How have others helped you build a spiritual foundation based on the Scripture?

READ: Call for a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

STUDY: Create small teams (a person can be a team). Instruct each group to review the information under Verses 16-17 in the PSG (pp. 94–95) to discover the four essential areas that made Scripture sufficient for equipping Timothy’s life and ministry. After allowing time for review, call for volunteers to share their findings. Then ask: How does using Scripture for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness (v. 16) equip a believer for “every good work”? (PSG, p. 95)
EMPHASIZE: Only God’s Word can inform us about what God expects of His people. Just as Timothy needed to use Scripture to develop strong moral character among believers at Ephesus, so we also need it to train our thoughts and actions to conform to God’s will today.

HIGHLIGHT: Affirm the Key Doctrine for this week’s session (The Scriptures) on page 95 of the PSG.

STATE: By continually saturating and nurturing himself in Scripture, Timothy would be thoroughly capable of godly living and effective leadership. He would prove in his own life the reality that Scripture is the tool God uses to develop spiritual maturity.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 4:1-4, and direct the rest of the group to listen for what will happen to the truth when it’s not guarded.

EMPHASIZE: State from the PSG (p. 96): Paul warned about the growing number of people who reject God’s truth in favor of personal preferences. Point to Pack Item 5 (Poster: First-Century Heresies) and give copies of Pack Item 13 (Handout: First-Century Heresies) to explain some of the false teaching that Timothy dealt with in his church.

HIGHLIGHT: People who turn from God’s truth and turn aside to embrace fabrications and falsehoods suffer a spiritual dislocation. Myths were fabrications of the imagination that satisfied a temporary preference but dismissed salvation in Christ.

ASK: What are some contemporary examples of “itching-ear” spirituality? How do those examples distort God’s Word? (PSG, p. 97)

READ: Call for a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 4:5-8, while the group listens for Paul’s instructions on how to finish well.

SUMMARIZE: Reflecting upon his life in Christ, Paul affirmed three accomplishments that carried continual implications. First, Paul endured the agony of spiritual warfare. Second, he had lived purposefully for the glory of Christ without quitting. Third, Paul had guarded the treasure of the gospel that had been entrusted to him. Furthermore, he had maintained a passionate faith in His Savior.

ASK: What is the relationship between fighting the good fight and keeping the faith? Can you have one without the other? Explain. (PSG, p. 98) After discussion, ask: Did anyone share anything in the group today that impacted how you would respond to those questions now?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

RECAP: Review the bulleted statements from In My Context (PSG, p. 99) with the group. Call for volunteers to share their answers to the following question: What truths would you share with a friend facing challenges for his or her faith in Christ? (PSG, p. 91)

REFLECT: Lead the group to discuss the first question set from In My Context on page 99 of the PSG: How can your group draw attention to the plight of persecuted believers? What specific action steps can you take to be a voice for them?

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God that we can rely on His Word. Ask for the strength not to be caught off guard when persecution arises.
PRACTICE

- Encourage your group members by reminding them that our faith journey is a walk and not a sprint. Tell your group members that you are praying for them this week to remain steadfast in their walks with Christ.

- Assign regular attenders the name of another group member to contact this week and check in with that person.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

Prior to the session, review current statistics on persecution available at www.persecution.com, or print a listing of people to pray for from www.icommittopray.com. As the group arrives, direct attention to page 91 of the PSG and invite a volunteer to read the paragraph. Then share your findings on persecution around the world and open the session with prayer.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

- To supplement discussion of 2 Timothy 3:12-13, use the stories from Nik Ripken’s *The Insanity of Obedience* of how, in a time when believers were to be silenced by oppression, their faith instead grew. Discuss times in the Bible when people’s faith grew when oppressed.

- For further study of 2 Timothy 3:14-17, illustrate how God’s Word is like someone driving and is corrected back onto the road to avoid destruction.

- To enhance application of 2 Timothy 4:5-8, find stories of people who ended their stories of faith well and those who did not. Lead the group in completing the Bible Skill (PSG, p. 98): Compare Paul’s last testament with the closing statements of others: King David (2 Sam. 23), Moses (Deut. 33), the dying thief (Luke 23), and Stephen (Acts 7). What common things, if any, do you find in these accounts? What do these reveal about the importance of faith at the end of life on earth?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

Supply pens and paper to the group. Encourage them to think through the third questions set under In My Context on page 99 of the PSG: As you are running the race of faith, what inspires you to persevere? List the names of believers who inspire you to finish well. What characteristics inspire you the most? What can you do to continue to develop those characteristics in your own life? Once they have identified someone who inspires them, provide time for them to write a note of encouragement to that person.

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA

Read the lyrics of the song “Forever,” by Chris Tomlin. You can supplement this activity by also reading Psalm 136 as a group.
TITUS 1:1-5, 10-16

MEMORY VERSE: TITUS 1:2

READ Titus 1:1-16, First Thoughts (p. 114), and Understand the Context (pp. 114–115). As you read, focus on how to stay true to the gospel no matter the circumstances.

STUDY Titus 1:1-5, 10-16, using Explore the Text on pages 115–119. Develop a summary statement of what was happening in the churches of Crete that prompted Paul to write this letter.

PLAN the group time using ideas under Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 120–121). Tailor the plans for your group using More Ideas (p. 122). Consider creative ways to use the Suggested Music Idea (p. 122) that are appropriate for your group.

GROW from the weekly podcast on Ministry Grid (MinistryGrid.com/ExploreTheBible).

GATHER the following items: ☐ Personal Study Guides. Prepare to display the following Pack Items:

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FIRST THOUGHTS

Whether we like it or not, truth contains a measure of intolerance. The gospel truth is graciously liberating and offered to whoever wants it, but it also has a measure of intolerance because no one can be right with God except by trusting His Son as Savior. People may view the truth as narrow-minded, but that does not change the reality of truth. We must remain faithful to the truth, knowing that some will reject that truth, and we are called to continue to love them regardless.

(In PSG, p. 100) In what ways can believers uphold the gospel message while respecting the rights of others who hold a different belief?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

TITUS 1:1-16

Letters written to long-time companions often combine personal sentiment and practical encouragement. Such was Paul’s epistle to Titus. Titus enjoyed a close relationship to the man who claimed him as his “true son” in the faith. Paul used a similar expression concerning Timothy, although Timothy had already become a believer before meeting the apostle (1 Tim. 1:2; Acts 16:1). In Titus’ case, Paul likely led him to Christ.

Like Timothy, Titus accompanied Paul on numerous missionary endeavors. Paul was grieved when he did not find Titus during his visit to Troas, but was comforted when he arrived in Macedonia (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6). Titus represented Paul to the Corinthians and reported back to Paul their reaction to Paul’s letter (2 Cor. 8:6-18,23; 12:18).

Earlier, Titus accompanied Paul and Barnabas in visiting the apostles in Jerusalem some fourteen years after Paul’s initial visit (Gal. 2:1-3). A Gentile, Titus came under pressure during that visit because he was uncircumcised. Paul stood firm on Titus’s behalf as he maintained his mission to the Gentiles.

Although Titus would eventually be sent to Dalmatia (2 Tim. 4:10), his primary ministry took place in Crete. The biblical timeline places Titus, and perhaps Timothy, on a trip with Paul through Crete and Ephesus. Paul left Titus in Crete and Timothy in Ephesus while he traveled on to Macedonia. Sometime between Paul’s first and second letter to Timothy, he penned this pastoral epistle to Titus.

Similar to First Timothy, Paul’s letter to Titus established guidelines for Titus’s ministry. As a church planter, Titus was responsible for starting new churches around the island of Crete. Since these new believers needed guidance in the faith, he helped with the selection and preparation of the various pastors. Paul’s list of qualifications for ministers was similar to

BIBLE SKILL

Create a chart of contrasts within a passage.
Create two columns. In one column, list the qualities Paul required of Titus and the Cretan pastors (Titus 1:1-9a). In a second column, write the characteristics of the Judaizers who were trying to corrupt the people (Titus 1:9b-16). What insights do you gain by comparing the two lists?
those mentioned in First Timothy. Unlike First Timothy, the opening chapter of Titus addresses only pastors. This omission does not mean that the churches of Crete would not have deacons.

Another resemblance between Titus and First Timothy involves Paul’s caution against false teachers and others who harmed the church. Certain greedy men had infiltrated the churches, teaching myths and superstitions to defraud the people financially. Consequently, both Titus and the pastors he appointed had to have impeccable character. This first chapter combines both sentiments within Paul’s opening instructions, providing encouragement for churches today.

**EXPLORE THE TEXT**

**SERVANT’S HEART (TITUS 1:1-3)**

**VERSES 1-2**

Paul began his letter in a style typical to his other epistles. He identified himself first as a *servant of God* and secondly as an *apostle of Jesus Christ*. The term *servant* refers to a bond slave of God. Tying the two phrases together, Paul indicated that his role as Jesus’ apostle was not a glory to be claimed but an assignment to be obeyed.

Paul’s purpose in both roles—as servant and apostle—was to benefit *God’s elect*. The word *elect* has been debated for centuries. In the Old Testament, a similar term refers to the Messiah (meaning “chosen one”). This same word described Israel (Isa. 45:4). Jesus used *elect* when speaking of believers who would be preserved in the end times (Matt. 24:22,31).

Risking oversimplification, we can understand *God’s elect* to mean persons who are saved. Paul employed the expression while writing about people who are justified by God through Christ (Rom. 8:33). The phrase glorifies God as Savior and identifies the elect as people who have received God’s salvation through Christ.

Specifically, Paul noted two aspects of the ways he was to serve. First, he was sent by Christ *for the faith*, that is, to share the gospel so people might believe in Jesus and be saved. Second, he encouraged the spiritual growth of believers by increasing *their knowledge*. Paul was no mere teacher of philosophy or worldly wisdom. His charge involved *the truth that leads to godliness*. Paul’s Jewish countrymen had zeal but lacked knowledge related to godly righteousness (Rom. 10:1-3). His divine commission involved helping people to know God through Christ (evangelism), and also to know God’s truth, resulting in right living (discipleship).

Paul ministered the gospel so people might live *in the hope of eternal life*. Such *hope* involves much more than wishful thinking. This word reflects confident anticipation. This prepositional phrase links eternal life with statements in verse 1. Paul’s service resulted in people having faith and hope. Their faith in Christ produced the confidence of eternal life.

Believers’ confidence rests in *God*. We can count on God’s Word because He *cannot lie*. His divinely righteous nature makes it impossible for God to
be false or to fail to fulfill His promises. **Before time began,** He **promised** eternal life to whoever would believe in Christ. The timeless nature of God looks back before eternity past while looking forward to eternity future. Scripture often refers to the enduring aspect of God’s plan of salvation. God’s kingdom was prepared for us from the foundation of the world (Matt. 13:35; 25:34). In his second letter to Timothy, Paul pointed to God’s salvation that was provided in Christ before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9-11).

**VERSE 3**

Although God’s plan of salvation began before the beginning of human reckoning, He **revealed his word in his own time.** In other letters, Paul likened God’s plan to a mystery that had been kept secret from the foundation of the world, but which had been revealed in Christ (Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:7; Col. 1:26-27). In God’s timing, He chose to reveal this mystery through preaching (Eph. 6:19). Paul had received this truth by revelation from Christ and had been commissioned to share that revelation with the world (Eph. 3:3).

Paul understood the serious nature of this message. He had been **entrusted with the gospel through the command of God our Savior.** Paul did not merely wake up one day and decide to be a preacher. Paul was called by the God who saved him to proclaim this good news. He received his commission as a command and a charge from his Savior, and it became the passion of his life. Similarly, all believers have a gospel trust that must be shared with others.

Why does God’s call require us to exercise a servant’s heart?

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**VERSES 4-5**

To Titus, my true son in our common faith. Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

The reason I left you in Crete was to set right what was left undone and, as I directed you, to appoint elders in every town.

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**PURPOSEFUL ACTION** (TITUS 1:4-5)

Paul considered Titus to be his **true son** in the faith. Unlike Timothy, who already was a Christian when Paul met him, **Titus** probably was led to Christ by the apostle. Paul used the phrase **our common faith** to describe their mutual belief in and commitment to Christ. Paul loved both of these young preachers and treated them as his sons in the ministry.

Together, Paul and Titus ministered to the people of **Crete,** a Mediterranean island south of Greece and southwest of modern Turkey. The only reference to Crete in the Book of Acts mentions Paul’s being taken to Rome as a prisoner. Therefore, the citation in Titus must have described a different visit not recorded in Acts. It may have occurred during Paul’s travels after being released from his first imprisonment.

Paul recognized much of the work there had been **left undone.** His use of the phrase **to set right** appears to mean correcting something that had been done wrong. However, the term literally means to “set in order.” He wanted Titus to complete the work they had begun. He obviously did not
intend Titus to reside in Crete permanently, since he later asked Titus to come and help him when replacement workers arrived (Titus 3:12).

One aspect of the task to be completed involved insuring each church had competent leaders. Paul directed Titus in the specific manner for proceeding. Not only because of their personal relationship, but primarily due to his apostolic authority, Paul had the right to instruct Titus in his ministry.

Two terms could cause misunderstanding to the casual reader. The text appears to give Titus the right to appoint elders in every town. The word translated elder is one of three terms Scripture uses for pastors. The other two words, bishop and shepherd, describe the leadership and pastoral care aspects of the pastor’s ministry. Paul went further to describe the qualifications the pastors needed in order to be spiritual leaders of Christ’s churches (Titus 1:6-9).

A simple understanding of Paul’s instruction to appoint elders could be understood to mean Titus was exercising an extension of Paul’s apostolic authority in choosing pastors for the churches. Another approach could incorporate the idea of ordaining pastors as Paul did in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (Acts 14:21-23). Neither interpretation negates the involvement of the congregations in choosing their pastors, but recognizes the new Christians’ need for guidance.

God commissions believers to help establish and strengthen local churches. As churches choose and support their leaders, the pastors respond by faithfully caring for the flock of God.

(in PSG, p. 104) Why was it necessary for Titus to complete the work that Paul had begun? How do believers today build on the work of previous generations?

OPPOSITION ADDRESSED (Titus 1:10-16)

VERSES 10-11
Paul highlighted Judaizers who were disrupting the Cretan believers. He characterized them as talkers and deceivers, dedicated to myths. Paul called them out, pointing to their behavior as evidence of their lack of credibility. Paul used several terms to describe them. First, there were many of these false teachers. Had the church only a few opponents, it may have had an easier time, but apparently the number had increased due to their constant campaign of interference.

Second, they were rebellious. Rejecting the gospel Paul had preached, these persons asserted teaching contrary to the truth. The word translated rebellious carries the idea of disobedience. They may have rebelled against God’s Word because they did not want to obey it.

Third, the opponents were full of empty talk. The emptiness of their dialogue was typical of idle, meaningless speculation. More malevolent
was their **deception**, suggesting they knew the truth but deliberately led people on a wrong path. Not possessing genuine truth, they used oratorical tricks to gain influence for personal advantage.

Paul partially identified the deceivers as being from the circumcision party. These people were like the Judaizers Paul addressed in Galatians and other letters. They insisted that anyone who wanted to be a Christian must also follow the practices and rituals of Judaism. By using the term especially, Paul clearly intended that others outside of the circumcision party also were involved in the opposition. Led by the Jewish proselytizers, a covenant of conspiracy combined several forces against the churches of Crete.

Paul urged Titus to **silence** these opponents. By refuting them with the truth of God’s Word, the young preacher would put them to shame. The truth of the gospel should quiet the error of his adversaries. Titus’ intervention was necessary because the false teachers were **ruining entire households**. Just as godly believers led many in their circles of influence to receive the gospel, even so these deceivers were affecting whole families.

Greed was the motivation for **teaching what they shouldn’t**. They wanted to **get money dishonestly**. Whether the households were individual families or some of the house churches, people often provided financial support for their teachers. Paul’s use of the word dishonestly indicates that the false teachers were not advocating a genuine ideology but were deceiving people to receive money.

**VERSES 12-14**

12 One of their very own prophets said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”

13 This testimony is true. For this reason, rebuke them sharply, so that they may be sound in the faith and may not pay attention to Jewish myths and the commands of people who reject the truth.

14 The indictment found in this verse should not be misunderstood as an ethnic pejorative, but should be seen in the context as Paul described the greedy false teachers. He quoted one of the indigenous prophets, likely a 6th century (BC) philosopher named Epimenides. Born in Crete, the writer described some of his people with three derogatory phrases. He called them **liars**, perhaps attacking their claims regarding guardianship of the tomb of a Greek god. Paul used this accusation to refer to the false teachers who lied for personal gain. The Cretan source also described the people as **evil beasts** and **lazy gluttons**, references to their proclivity toward wickedness and idle pursuit of pleasure.

The fact that Paul wanted them to be **sound** in the faith suggests some of them may have been believers. This was the reason Titus should **rebuke them sharply**. His goal was correction and redemption. Paul’s phrase rebuke sharply employed a compound word meaning to intervene preemptively lest the false doctrine continue its destructive path. To be firmly grounded in their new faith, the Cretan believers needed to embrace sound doctrine.

The goal also included warning people to not pay attention to **Jewish myths**. This statement refers back to Paul’s previous instructions to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:4). It also recalls his condemnation of the deceitful teaching of the Judaizers in verse 10.

Paul also wanted the Cretan believers to mature so they would ignore the **commands of people who reject the truth**. The term commands reveals that the dishonest teachers not only had deceived with false doctrine, but had used their influence to order the lives of their followers. In a second
condemnation of the false teachers, Paul highlighted the fact that they had encountered the truth of the gospel but had deliberately turned aside from it.

VERSE 15
In other places, Paul wrote about the issue of whether to eat certain foods, particularly meat that had been offered to idols. (See 1 Cor. 8:4; Rom. 14:14-23.) The immediate context of verse 15 relates to the Jewish teachers’ insistence that Gentile Christians follow Jewish customs, including dietary laws. Therefore, Paul’s admonition could refer to the eating of certain meat.

His point was that the person who had a pure heart saw the pure quality of other things. On the other hand, people who were defiled and unbelieving viewed other things and other people with their twisted perception. They saw nothing as pure because their mind and conscience were defiled. The word mind involves not only intelligence, but perception and ways of thinking. The term conscience goes further, describing a person’s ability to discern right from wrong. An unbeliever views the world without spiritual sensibility.

VERSE 16
Focusing specifically on the rebellious people who were deceiving God’s people, Paul attacked the validity of their salvation. They might claim to know God, but their greedy works revealed their evil hearts. Paul did not hold back in his condemnation, but used three strong descriptions to highlight their wickedness. They were detestable. Their deceit of the new believers of Crete was repulsive. They were disobedient. This term goes further than occasionally doing what is wrong. These people had developed a habitual lifestyle of disregarding and disobeying God’s Word.

Consequently, these degenerates were unfit for any good work. From their selfish motives to their sensual desires to their deceptive methods, the false teachers had proven themselves worthless when it came to godly service. Like Titus, modern believers must be willing to confront proponents of corrupt doctrine head-on and call them to repentance.

What are the dangers of believers failing to address false teachings head on? What might keep a believer from taking a firm stand? Do you think Paul was overbearing when he instructed Titus to rebuke sharply the false teachers? Why or why not?
LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

INTRODUCE: As the group arrives, direct them to share examples of things that are inclusive and exclusive. Ask: In the examples provided, how can exclusivity be perceived as negative? Conversely, how can it be perceived as positive? Ask the same questions regarding being inclusive.

ASK: In what ways can believers uphold the gospel message while respecting the rights of others who hold a different belief? (PSG, p. 100)

HIGHLIGHT: Direct the group’s attention to Pack Item 1 (Map: The World of Paul, Timothy, and Titus) and Pack Item 11 (Handout: Titus: A Snapshot) as a way to introduce him and the letter.

TRANSITION: Today we’re going to look at Paul’s letter to Titus, one of the pastors he trained, and how he encouraged Titus to stay true to the gospel. Share your summary statement of why Paul wrote his letter to Titus.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Call for a volunteer to read Titus 1:1-3.

EXPLAIN: Paul viewed the gospel as something entrusted to him. The gospel was given to be shared.

ASK: How does knowing that God is always truthful give believers confidence to share the gospel?

GUIDE: Paul was under the authority of God, and he was responsible to God for preaching the gospel to others. Therefore, Paul could say to Titus—and to all people who are saved by grace through faith—that God is Savior.

HIGHLIGHT: Call attention to the Key Doctrine (Evangelism and Missions) on page 103 of the PSG to emphasize how Paul’s introduction to Titus reflected his heart for evangelism and missions.

ASK: Why was it important for Paul to emphasize that the gospel has been entrusted to believers? How should viewing the gospel as a sacred trust impact a believer’s life? (PSG, p. 103)

TRANSITION: Not only should believers know that we have been entrusted with the gospel, but the gospel calls us to action to display its power in our lives.

READ: Direct someone to read Titus 1:4-5, while others identify how Paul addressed Titus.

CLARIFY: Point to the information under Verses 4-5 (PSG, pp. 103–104) to explain what Paul meant by calling Titus his son and the role Titus would have in Crete.

ASK: Why was it necessary for Titus to complete the work that Paul had begun? How do believers today build on the work of previous generations? (PSG, p. 104)

TRANSITION: The call of Paul to Titus relates to the exhortation in 2 Timothy 1 to teach future generations the gospel and godliness. Paul went further to address living for Christ means there will be opposition. Use Pack Item 4 (Poster: 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9) to help supplement this comparison.
READ: Call on a volunteer to read Titus 1:10-11, while the rest listen for the trouble makers Titus was to watch for in the church.

LIST: Highlight verse 10, and lead the group to list the characteristics of the people whom Titus was to be aware of in the church (rebellious, idle talkers, deceivers). Guide the group to complete the Bible Skill (PSG, p. 104).

STATE: Paul stressed that false teachers were adding unnecessary stipulations to salvation and disrupting groups of believers with precepts that weren’t necessary. His solution was to silence them.

ASK: What might motivate a person to distort the gospel? What are ways people distort the gospel today?

TRANSITION: Paul saw the need to teach Titus how to deal with heresies within the church.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Titus 1:12-16.

EXPLAIN: A forceful response to the false teachers was vital to the health of the churches based upon their description by Paul in verse 12. Paul’s goal was first and foremost redemptive and restorative, but he would not overlook the severity of the problem.

ASK: What did Paul say to anticipate how the Cretans would respond in verse 14? The sad but clear indictment of the heretics was that they rejected the truth. They had heard the truth of the gospel but turned away from it to chase after their own creation of truth.

CONTRAST: Paul gave a distinction of the motives of the pure and defiled churches. Create two teams. Direct one team to make a list of the characteristics of the pure and the other of the defiled. Call for each group to share. Lead the group to compare the lists, focusing on the fruit each produces.

EMPHASIZE: Paul’s strong critique was necessary because of the damage being done by the troublemakers. Since they preferred to resist God’s truth and rebel against His saving purposes, they proved themselves to be useless in His kingdom.

ASK: What are the dangers of believers failing to address false teachings head on? What might keep a believer from taking a firm stand? Do you think Paul was overbearing when he instructed Titus to rebuke sharply the false teachers? Why or why not? (PSG, p. 107)

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

SHARE: Lead the group to turn to a neighbor and share something from today’s study that gives them courage to stand firm on the truths of the Bible. Reference the chart “Major Themes in Titus” on page 107 of the PSG for guidance.

REFLECT: Lead the group to discuss the third question set from In My Context on page 108 of the PSG: Reflect on ways that your life and voice have been used by God to address false teachings. Thank God for that opportunity and ask Him to help you continue to be a voice for Him in the future.

PRAY: Close in prayer that believers will faithfully share God’s Word and look for ways to strengthen His church.
PRACTICE

• Email your group members and ask for a way that you can personally help them develop in their faith. Take one action that helps each person move forward.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

As an alternative Focus Attention, begin the session by telling of a time (or enlisting a volunteer to share) when your faith was challenged by someone who taught false doctrine. Explain how you handled the situation and what led you to truth. Then highlight today’s summary statement (from p. 113 in this guide): Believers are accountable for rejecting false teachers and teachings.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

• To enhance the discussion of the servant’s heart in Titus 1:1-3, view other ways that Paul introduced his letters for comparisons of how he described himself in relationship to Christ and the people he wrote to in his letters. Use Pack Item 12 (Handout: Paul’s Letters) to guide the research.

• To supplement the teaching of how Paul addressed Titus in Titus 1:4, challenge the group to think about their true spiritual children in the faith (not necessarily biological) and how they are developing those sons and daughters today.

• To support the teaching for Titus 1:10-16, help the group understand the history of Crete and the influence that Paul had in that region. Provide a Bible dictionary and invite a volunteer to scan the information about Crete. Some group members may want to do an Internet search using their smartphones or other devices.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

To wrap up the session, remind the group of challenges they listed on page 108 of the PSG prior to the group time. If they have not listed any, allow time to do so. Ask: How could you be better prepared to face that challenge in the future? (PSG, p. 108)

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA

Read the lyrics of the hymn “There Is a Savior,” by Greg Nelson, Bob Farrell, and Sandi Patty. Focus on the words in the song for believers to stay true to the gospel. Discuss how the words of the song echo Paul’s directions to Titus.
Living with Integrity
Believers are to live so that they bring honor to Jesus.

TITUS 2:1-15
MEMORY VERSE: TITUS 2:13

READ Titus 2:1-15, First Thoughts (p. 124), and Understand the Context (pp. 124–125). As you read, note the actions and attitudes repeatedly called for by Paul.

STUDY Titus 2:1-15, using Explore the Text on pages 125–129. Identify ways believers are to help train other believers. Note instances where you see this happening in your group to affirm their actions.

PLAN the group time using ideas under Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 130–131) and More Ideas (p. 132). Prepare to lead your group to live with integrity and follow Christ. Consult QuickSource for additional questions that you can use in leading the discussion and an Object Lesson idea for this week’s study.

GROW with other group leaders at the Groups Ministry blog (LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry).

GATHER the following items: ☐ Personal Study Guides. Prepare to display the following Pack Items:
☐ PACK ITEM 2 (Outlines of 1,2 Timothy; Titus); and ☐ PACK ITEM 6 (Key Verse: 2 Timothy 2:15). Make copies for the group of: ☐ PACK ITEM 8 (Handout: Memory Verse Bookmark); and ☐ PACK ITEM 9 (Handout: Models of Church Structure).
**FIRST THOUGHTS**

Most of us want our hometown to be represented well. We want to take pride in claiming ties to the city or area we consider home. A city is usually defined by its people more so than by its geography or other features. Even though we may no longer live in that city or area, we contribute to the identity of that city or area by the way we represent it to others. In the same way, we contribute to the way people perceive Christ by how we represent Him in this world.

(In PSG, p. 109) **What or who gives your city or region its identity? How did it get that identity and how does that identity impact your city or area now?**

**UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT**

**TITUS 2:1-15**

Although written around the same time as First Timothy, Paul’s epistle to Titus contains several differences. For example, in First Timothy Paul gave specific direction about servants (1 Tim. 6:1-2). While he also addressed the role of servants in this letter, Paul went further to include older men, older women, younger women, and younger women (Titus 2:1-10). Perhaps Paul expanded the scope of his directive because Titus was working with new believers.

The two letters also contain similarities. For example, in addition to delineating qualifications for pastors, Paul admonished Timothy and Titus to be examples for the believers. If they wanted their church members to live godly lives, these young preachers must be consistent in their personal conduct. (See Titus 2:7-8; 1 Tim. 4:12.) Paul required Titus not only to teach believers to maintain consistent integrity but also to illustrate this principle in his behavior.

This chapter links orthodoxy (right beliefs) with orthopraxy (right living). Paul’s reference to sound teaching not only resonated in contrast to the false teachers but also provided the foundation for personal conduct (Titus 2:1,7). Titus’s doctrinal instruction should be reflected practically in his life. His ministry stood in stark contrast to the dishonest teachers involved in doctrinal error and sin.

Paul addressed generational relationships by calling on the older women to help the younger women learn proper conduct (Titus 2:3-5). Interestingly, while Paul did not task the older men with training the younger, he told Titus to encourage both regarding godly behavior. This guidance went into much more detail than First Timothy (1 Tim. 5:1-2). Again, the Cretan Christians might have needed extra guidance, while Timothy ministered to the more established church at Ephesus.

In all matters, the basis for requiring standards of Christian behavior was Jesus Christ. Because God extended His grace through Jesus, believers...
should live for His glory. Another motivation for godliness was their anticipation of Jesus’ return. The fact that first century Christians believed in Christ’s imminent return should not create doubt for modern readers who also await His Second Coming. Jesus instructed believers of every generation to be watchful, being constantly prepared for His appearing. (See Luke 21:29-36; Mark 13:31-37; Matt. 24:42.)

EXPLORE THE TEXT

SPOKEN (TITUS 2:1)

VERSE 1
With the contrasting conjunction, **but**, Paul referred to the previous chapter, highlighting the difference between Titus and the defiled unbelievers. Unlike their deception, Titus was to speak the truth of the gospel. Paul urged Titus to **proclaim** these things. Paul’s choice of words can refer to preaching, but usually involves more informal speech. In our public statements and private conversations, we are to testify about the truth of the gospel.

Titus was expected to teach matters **consistent with sound teaching**. These included Paul’s instructions to various groups in Crete. It also completed the contrast between **sound teaching** and the false teaching which Titus was to refute (1:9). By remaining faithful to the gospel, Titus could speak with authority. In the same way, when we speak consistently with Scripture, we cooperate with the Holy Spirit who leads people to the truth.

**(In PSG, p. 111) What is the danger of failing to verbally present the truth of the gospel, relying on actions alone to speak?**

ACTED (TITUS 2:2-10)

VERSES 2-5
Gospel truth needs expression through believers’ lives. Paul instructed Titus to direct various groups according to their generations. He began with **older men**, perhaps because people looked to them for guidance and wisdom. Although the term has the same root as elder, it specifies men of a certain age rather than the office of pastor. Paul emphasized character, out of which good conduct proceeds.

First, these senior saints should be **self-controlled**. Paul previously used this word to describe qualifications for the pastors and the wives of deacons (1 Tim. 3:2,11). In this instance, he referred to the need for older men to be temperate and self-restrained.

Second, these men should live in a way that is **worthy of respect**. This phrase translates a word meaning to be dignified and honorable. The term emphasizes the way a person generates respect.

**VERSE 1**

1 But you are to proclaim things consistent with sound teaching.

**VERSES 2-5**

2 Older men are to be self-controlled, worthy of respect, sensible, and sound in faith, love, and endurance. In the same way, older women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not slaves to excessive drinking. They are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and to love their children, to be self-controlled, pure, workers at home, kind, and in submission to their husbands, so that God’s word will not be slandered.
A third quality involved being **sensible**. Sometimes translated as self-controlled, this characteristic involves being prudent and of sound mind. Their speech and actions should demonstrate spiritual wisdom expected of a mature believer.

The final description for older men involves three aspects. They should be **sound in faith, love, and endurance**. Invoking the idea of wholesome behavior, Paul wanted these elders to exemplify qualities others could follow. Their faith should not only reflect personal belief in Christ but also exhibit practical trust in Christ. They were to love others with Christ’s love. Through everything, they should demonstrate endurance, showing patience even during trying times because of their hope in Christ.

The opening phrase of verse 3, **in the same way**, could imply that the qualities of the previous verse also applied to the women. More likely it meant that Titus’ instruction was of similar manner and importance. Paul expected the **older women** to reflect godly characteristics following the same pattern as his charge to the older men.

As with the previous teaching, this list contains four emphases. First, these women should be **reverent in behavior**. Their character and conduct ought to reflect holy lifestyles.

Twice, imperatives were stated in negative terms. These women should not be **slanderers**. Earlier, Paul warned the deacons’ wives not to be gossips (1 Tim. 3:11). Although the current use applied to all older women, it carried the same idea. We should not gather that these passages meant that improper speech was a problem limited to aged women but understand it in the context of instruction to relatively new believers.

The second of the two negative directives urged the women not to be **slaves to excessive drinking**. Two erroneous implications might be made. First, some readers could imply that use of alcoholic beverages was permitted as long as the user did not get drunk. Second, others might suggest that excessive drinking was a problem experienced by the Cretan women and not the men, since this directive is not included in the previous verse. Either interpretation would be false.

Paul addressed expectations of mature believers for the sake of glorifying Christ and setting examples for younger believers. This understanding carries additional weight in light of Paul’s fourth instruction—that the older women **teach what is good**.

All four qualities provide a foundation for the mentoring relationship between generations. These mature believers not only were to demonstrate godly characteristics for their personal benefit, but **so that they may encourage the young women**.

We might assume that the younger women should not need extra encouragement to **love their husbands** and **children**. However, Paul felt Titus should make this point as he instructed the older women. While a different letter emphasized husbands’ love for their wives (Eph. 5:25), Paul’s letter to Titus shows the equal importance of wives loving their families.

In addition to love, the younger women were expected to be **self-controlled**. This quality mirrored one characteristic of older men (Titus 2:2). Christian women should exhibit moderation. Some commentators
point out that since the word pure followed the term self-controlled, the phrase meant the younger women should keep impulses under control. However, if these words were linked, the relationship probably would have been more direct. In either case, Paul wanted the older women to teach the younger ones to be morally pure and temperate in all things.

Godly wives would be diligent workers at home. This does not mean that women could not be employed outside the home but rather emphasized the important role of wives and mothers in the home. This idea complements the admonition for them to be in submission to their husbands. Paul believed the way wives related to their husbands was a vital witness of the church. (See Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18.) A right relationship in the home was necessary so that God’s word will not be slandered. If Christian husbands and wives could not model a godly marriage, unbelievers would have a basis for attacking the gospel.

Between these last two characteristics lies the simple, but important, attribute of being kind. This term often translates as “good.” Some writers suggest the word should be understood in connection with the phrase that follows. In that case, Paul was describing women as kind and submissive in their interactions with their husbands. Believing women should be good and kind as basic character qualities.

VERSES 6-8
As in verse 3, Paul used the phrase in the same way to tie instructions for one group with those for a second. While he did not specifically include the character qualities for the young men with those of other groups, Paul apparently meant for them to be understood. He felt it sufficient to encourage them to be self-controlled. Although the phrase in everything in all things begins verse 7, it appears to fit best as modifying the term self-controlled. This statement seems to be all-inclusive. The term self-controlled comes from the same root as that applied to the young women in verse 5. These men were expected to act wisely in all aspects of life.

Paul changed his focus back to Titus’ personal conduct by using the personal pronoun yourself. At the same time, since Titus was young, Paul’s admonitions could be included in the advice to the other young men. He should not set standards for other believers unless he could make himself an example of good works.

A pastor cannot successfully lead a congregation unless he exhibits integrity and dignity. The context suggests this charge applied especially to Titus’ teaching. As Titus trained various generations, they would be examining his life to see if it was consistent with his teaching. The normal sense of integrity involved trustworthiness in all areas of life. This term added a sense of moral reliability as Titus modeled godliness for the believers.

Similarly, Paul expected Titus to demonstrate dignity in his ministry. This word has the same connotation as the expression in verse 2 that described the way older men should be worthy of respect. If he expected the esteem of his hearers, Titus had to be serious about the subject and the manner of his teaching.

Not only must Titus’s personal life be exemplary, his message should be sound beyond reproach. Titus had many adversaries. They watched for
any basis for attack. With the word us, Paul included himself as participant in Titus’s struggle. Paul knew that their antagonists did not have anything valid with which to attack them. He wanted Titus to be sure not to give them any ammunition.

VERSES 9-10
Paul did not endorse the practice of slavery but offered advice about how believing slaves could turn their condition into a positive testimony for Christ. He encouraged them to submit to their masters. Paul made similar statements in other epistles (Col. 3:22; 1 Tim. 6:1). At the same time, he urged believing masters to treat their believing slaves as brothers instead of slaves, giving them what was right and fair (Col. 4:1; Philem. 1:16).

By including a warning against stealing, Paul dealt with a problem among slaves in general rather than a specific issue among Christians who were slaves. As they showed themselves to be completely trustworthy, these believers would further their witness.

Paul’s reasoning offered an interesting metaphor. By showing themselves to be honest and loyal, the believing slaves would adorn the teaching of God our Savior. The phrase portrays the transforming power of the gospel. If those persons who were treated so poorly could live out the virtues of Christ followers, their uprightness would lend further credence to the message of God’s salvation. Similarly, modern believers should reveal godliness in their lives regardless of their age or station in life.

(In PSG, p. 114) How can the way we live our lives and conduct our business be a means of advancing the gospel?

VERSES 11-13
For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

EMPOWERED (TITUS 2:11-14)
VERSES 11-13
The gospel is motivation for a godly life, which cannot be achieved apart from Christ. Paul’s reference to the appearance of the grace of God pointed to Jesus. God’s grace not only provided salvation through Christ but was embodied in Christ. Jesus’ atoning death and victorious resurrection made it possible for all people to be saved. This statement does not suggest that every person will be saved but rather that anyone can be saved through Christ.

God’s grace not only provides the means of salvation but also offers guidance in living out our salvation. It teaches us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts. Contrasted against a godless lifestyle, God’s grace teaches us to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way. To live sensibly involves properly moderating our behavior to honor the Lord. Righteous living describes a right relationship with God that exalts His justice and righteousness. The final descriptor, godly, means that which is pleasing to God.

Maintaining godly lives prepares us for what is to come and what is to come motivates us to maintain godly lives. We wait for something greater.
than what we experience in this world. Ever since Jesus was taken up into heaven, believers have anticipated the blessed hope. Such hope does not involve weak wishful thinking, but is a firm expectation.

Our hope is blessed because it involves the appearing of Jesus Christ. Jesus was received up into glory and will return in glory (Acts 1:9-11). When He appears, believers shall appear with Him in glory (Col. 3:4). The hope of His glory causes us to rejoice (Rom. 5:2).

VERSE 14
Jesus is our Savior because He gave himself for us. The word gave encompasses more than we can imagine. Jesus left His throne in glory to take on human flesh. He suffered and died to redeem us from all lawlessness. Through His sacrifice, Jesus freed us from the control and consequences of sin (Rom 6:17-22).

The second result of Christ’s redemption was to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession. Only by His blood can the church, Christ’s Bride, be cleansed and presented to Him as spotless and pure (Eph. 5:25-27). Having been freed and cleansed, believers should be eager to do good works, not as a means to salvation but as the result of salvation (Eph. 2:10).

How do you see evidence of Christ’s power in you for godly living?

AUTHORITY (TITUS 2:15)

VERSE 15
Being ignored can be worse than experiencing opposition. Paul did not want anyone to disregard Titus. The phrase let no one suggests Titus had a responsibility in making sure people took him and his message seriously.

As mentioned in verse 1, Titus was to proclaim these things in such a way that people listened. The good news was too important to be disregarded. Second, Paul wanted Titus to encourage and rebuke. These twin aspects of love offered comfort and conviction, reassurance and reproof. The gospel admonishes the sinner while consoling the one who comes to Christ for salvation.

Titus could speak this good news with all authority. Jesus possesses all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18). He grants authority to His followers as they speak on His behalf (John 20:21). When believers boldly teach godliness in the authority of Christ, people are impacted by His gospel and, through Him, can be changed forever.

How does having Christ’s authority enable you to succeed even in intimidating situations?
FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

STUDY: As the group arrives, invite them to share childhood experiences when it was difficult to demonstrate integrity (stealing something small, cheating in a game, etc). Ask: What made it difficult to do so? What lessons did you learn from those experiences that impact you today?

STATE: We contribute to how people perceive Christ by the way we represent Him in this world, which reminds us of the importance of having integrity as believers.

ASK: What do repeated actions and attitudes reveal about the importance of that specific action or attitude?

TRANSITION: Today we’re going to discuss how vital our integrity is to the sharing of the gospel. Give a brief review of Titus using Pack Item 2 (Outlines of 1,2 Timothy; Titus).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Titus 2:1, as others listen for the reason behind the contrasting conjunction but.

STATE: Titus faced a communication task that was decisively at odds with the false teachers who manipulated truth and twisted Scripture for their own advantage. Therefore, the spoken Word of God wields the power to change lives, and changed lives can revolutionize entire cultures in every tribe and nation around the world.

HIGHLIGHT: Review the Key Doctrine (Sanctification) on page 124 (PSG, p. 115). Lead the group to discuss how the statement relates to how Paul encouraged Titus to live.

ASK: What is the danger of failing to verbally present the truth of the gospel, relying on actions alone to speak? (PSG, p. 111) Point out Pack Item 6 (Key Verse: 2 Timothy 2:15). Emphasize how this verse applies to every person, not just church leaders.

READ: Call on someone to read Titus 2:2-10, while others circle the behavioral qualities that should be evident in believers.

LIST: Guide the group to list the four qualities found in verse 2 (“self-controlled, worthy of respect, sensible, and sound in faith, love, and endurance”). Explain that this extended to the young men needing to be taught how to be self-controlled in their actions.

ASK: Lead the group to create a chart using the headings “Older Men,” “Older Women,” “Younger Men,” “Younger Women,” and “Bondslaves.” Invite them to call out the actions identified by Paul for every group. Then guide the group to compare the actions of each group, looking for any shared themes or goals.

ASK: What are the connections between what the older and younger generations were to do? How does one generation impact the other? Review Pack Item 9 (Handout: Models of Church Structure). Ask: What role do generations have in church leadership?
DIRECT: Highlight the comments about Titus 2:9-10 in the PSG (p. 113). Ask: What principles are working in the background?

ASK: How can the way we live our lives and conduct our business be a means of advancing the gospel? (PSG, p. 114)

TRANSITION: Not only are we to have standards, but we are to empower others to follow Christ.

READ: Call for a volunteer to read Titus 2:11-14, as the group listens for the source of power for living righteously.

EXPLAIN: Paul explained that the gospel acts as the motivation for integrity. The gospel that transforms a life is demonstrated by how the individual begins to say “no” to those things that are ungodly. Finally, the gospel encourages us in our time of waiting for Jesus' return to pursue integrity.

ASK: How do you see evidence of Christ's power in you for godly living? (PSG, p. 115)

TRANSITION: The power that we have to serve Christ comes from His authority.

READ: Read Titus 2:15, while the group listens for the commands given by Paul.

EXPLAIN: Paul stated three commands within this verse (say, encourage, and rebuke) that were to encourage behaviors and attitudes that sought integrity.

ASK: Why would it have been important for Paul to remind Titus of acting in God’s authority? Could these actions be carried out successfully outside of God’s authority? Explain. (PSG, p. 116)

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

INVITE: Call for volunteers to name one action they will take this week as a result of today’s study.

RESPOND: Guide the group through the third question set under In My Context in the PSG (p. 117): Discuss with your group ways of encouraging other generations to live godly lives. Include identifying ways for the group to be examples to other believers. List insights gained from the discussion.

CHALLENGE: Encourage the group to pray through Titus 2:13 this week, asking God to reveal an area that they should focus on improving in the example they set. Have copies of Pack Item 8 (Handout: Memory Verse Bookmark) ready to give to those who need one.

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God for the power to live godly lives through the truth and power of gospel.
PRACTICE

• Contact your group and encourage them to know that they are empowered to follow Christ this week. Ask if there is any major decision coming up in their family that you can pray for individually.

• Consider new ways to make guests feel welcome in your group. Gather input from the newest members of your group for insight.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

To replace the Focus Attention idea, introduce the session by reading the first paragraph on page 109 of the PSG. Then ask: What or who gives your city or region its identity? How did it get that identity and how does that identity impact your city or area now? (PSG, p. 109)

EXPLORE THE TEXT

• To supplement the teaching of Titus 2, read Deuteronomy 6 and identify the call to pass on the truth of God’s Word from one generation to the next.

• To provide further study of Titus 2:11-14, create teams and ask each to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 116 of the PSG. After allowing time, call the group back together to discuss: How would you explain redemption to someone? (PSG, p. 116)

• To enhance the teaching of Titus 2:11-14, explain the power that was given to the church in Acts 1:8-10 to share the gospel. Emphasize the Key Doctrine (Sanctification) on page 115 of the PSG: Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God’s purposes and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him (Eph. 2:8-10).

• To supplement the teaching on Titus 2:15, share the promises given in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples based on the authority of Christ.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

Read the bulleted points under In My Context (PSG, p. 117) and discuss practical ways to demonstrate godliness. Lead the group to identify obstacles that might need to be overcome and to brainstorm strategies for overcoming those obstacles.

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA

Review the lyrics of “Even If,” by MercyMe, and discover how the words encourage believers to still worship and serve the Lord through all circumstances.
Living to Do

Believers should look for opportunities to do good works as acts of worship.

TITUS 3:1-11

MEMORY VERSE: TITUS 3:14

READ Titus 3:1-15, First Thoughts (p. 134), and Understand the Context (p. 134). As you read, make notes on how you would describe the difference between salvation through faith and the role of good works.

STUDY Titus 3:1-11, using Explore the Text on pages 135–139. Record potential questions your group might ask. Note the Key Doctrine (Justification) and how Paul described it in his letters.

PLAN the group time using Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 140–141), More Ideas (p. 142), ideas included in QuickSource, and ideas online at Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploretheBible/Adults/LeaderExtras. Customize a plan to meet the needs of your group. Spend time in prayer for your group, as this can be an opportunity to share how salvation is not based on works.

GROW from the weekly podcast on Ministry Grid (MinistryGrid.com/ExploreTheBible).

GATHER the following items: ☐ Personal Study Guides. Prepare to display the following Pack Item:
☐ PACK ITEM 2 (Outlines of 1,2 Timothy; Titus). Make copies for the group of: ☐ PACK ITEM 9 (Handout: Models of Church Structure); and ☐ PACK ITEM 11 (Handout: Titus: A Snapshot).
FIRST THOUGHTS

People who have been imprisoned for their faith remain faithful despite great costs. Christians with few economic resources give sacrificially to relieve believers fleeing their homes during religious persecution. Faithful laymen use their business opportunities to share Jesus with others. Believers around the world demonstrate their faith in difficult situations. As believers, we are responsible for walking like our Savior and doing good deeds for others.

(In PSG, p. 118) How might a believer’s good works point others to Jesus?
How can a believer communicate his or her motive for doing good works in a way that honors God?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

TITUS 3:1-15

Understanding Paul’s letter to Titus requires reading it as a letter to a colleague, not just a theological treatise. The original form lacked the chapter and verse divisions that were added later for ease of reference. Sometimes these markers break up the natural thought patterns of a letter. Understanding Paul’s intent requires Bible students to look at the way sentences and paragraphs should naturally follow each other.

Consequently, the opening verses of chapter 3 refer back to the people addressed in chapter 2. Paul had given specific instructions about how Titus should teach various groups regarding personal character and relational conduct. As he moved toward the letter’s conclusion, Paul summarized his comments and expanded them to describe how believers should live out their faith in a wide range of situations. From dealing with authorities to interactions with other people, they were to honor Christ.

Lest the Cretan Christians get the idea that Paul and Titus were speaking down to them, Paul interjected a personal confession. He shared how radically different his own life and Titus’s life was before salvation. He emphasized how God had shown grace in spite of terrible sins. Indeed, the Lord could work in and through the Cretan believers to demonstrate His transforming power.

Despite their best efforts, Paul and Titus still encountered opponents outside and within the churches. Paul urged his son in the ministry to avoid useless debates and remain true to the message. The work Titus was called to do was urgent; he had limited time to set the foundation on which other colleagues would build. When another pastor arrived from Paul, Titus would leave Crete to join Paul in Nicopolis where they would spend the winter. In the meantime, Titus’s pastoral ministry required strengthening the disciples in their faith and in their walks with Christ.

KEY DOCTRINE

Justification

Justification is God’s gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ (Rom. 3:23-25).

BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR

EXPLORE THE TEXT

GOOD DEEDS (TITUS 3:1-2)

VERSES 1-2
Titus was not a novice in his ministry on the island of Crete. He helped establish churches and develop young believers. He ministered alongside Paul before Paul moved northward and left Titus to continue the work. Paul urged Titus to remind the Cretans of certain qualities of Christ followers. While not an exhaustive list, he mentioned six attitudes and actions.

As mentioned in the context study, chapter and verse divisions can cause readers to miss connections between various sections of text. When Paul mentioned them in this verse, he was referring back to persons cited in the previous chapter. He addressed various generational groups as well as slaves, but all were believers. God had made these people into “his own possession” who would be “eager to do good works” (Titus 2:14).

Paul repeated the need for believers to be ready for every good work. He was urging people who were saved by God’s grace to be prepared to act when they encountered opportunities for good work. First, he urged the believers to submit to rulers and authorities. Crete was under Roman control and ruled by various civil authorities. The indigenous population was primarily Greek with a minority group of Jewish residents. The rulers likely were the Roman governors or proconsuls. Authorities administered Roman laws while being mindful of Greek cultures.

Paul’s admonition contrasts respectful believers with people he had described as “rebellious” (1:10). He specifically mentioned the “circumcision party,” suggesting that the Judaizers were responsible for an unruly spirit among the population (1:11). The conduct of Cretan Christians would demonstrate how their faith led them to be more model citizens than their opponents.

These believers also were responsible to obey. Some commentators suggest the difference between being submissive and being willing to obey involved first the mindset and second the deed. In neither case did Paul advocate believers going along with orders that contradicted their loyalty to Christ. Paul’s consistent example showed his respect for authorities. Yet he remained faithful to Christ, although it meant being beaten, arrested, and imprisoned.

Next, Paul urged the Cretans to demonstrate Christlikeness in their interpersonal relationships. They should slander no one. Believers should not verbally attack people with evil intent. Consequently, Christians should avoid fighting, whether physically or with abusive speech. While believers ought to avoid quarreling with one another, this caution relates to their interactions with unbelievers as well.

In all ways, believers should be kind, reflecting the compassion and character of Christ. More than merely avoiding contention, the Cretan Christians were to demonstrate benevolence in attitude, always showing gentleness in their actions. We may find it easy to behave this way with people who are nice to us, but Paul urged kindness to all people.

VERSES 1-2
1 Remind them to submit to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,
2 to slander no one, to avoid fighting, and to be kind, always showing gentleness to all people.

BIBLE SKILL
Compare usage of the same word in different passages.

Paul used the term or idea of heirs in several of his letters. In one column, write these references: Romans 8:14-17; Ephesians 1:11,18; 3:6; Galatians 3:29; 4:7; and Titus 3:7. In the second column, summarize how each passage describes believers as heirs of God. Also, consider the concept of inheritance in Galatians 3:18; Ephesians 1:11-14; and Colossians 1:12. What insights do you gain from each passage about being an heir? How would you summarize Paul’s understanding of being an heir of God based on these passages?
VERE 3

For we too were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another.

VERE 4-5

But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, he saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy—through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

(Based on His Mercy (Titus 3:3-7))

VERSE 3

In a confessional spirit, Paul identified with the need for spiritual guidance. His use of the word we included not only himself and Titus, but all believers. Paul described qualities of people before and after conversion. The word foolish was not meant to disparage someone as unintelligent. Instead, it describes one’s refusing to employ God-given mental abilities for wise decisions. While being foolish relates to imprudent decisions, being disobedient reflects unwillingness to follow God’s direction. This word paints the picture of a general attitude of disobedience and rebellion. Earlier in this letter, Paul used the term to describe the lost (1:16).

The second pair of characteristics also reflects qualities similar to one another. To be deceived can lead to being enslaved. People may be misled about beliefs as well as what constitutes proper behavior. If they continue under false influences, they can become shackled by various passions and pleasures. These terms can include lusts of the flesh but could also involve other immoral behavior. Lacking the truth of God’s Word, they become bound by covetous desires.

The third set of qualities lists three aspects of sinful attitudes. They were living in malice and envy. Malice involves a depraved intention to harm others. By coupling this idea with envy, the source of malice lies in jealousy of others and ends in people loathing one another. The words hateful and detesting one another appear to follow a pattern of Hebrew parallelism in which successive terms modify and expand the first. Sin toward God inevitably leads to animosity toward people.

VERSE 4-5

With a single word, but, Paul contrasted the sinfulness of an unregenerate life with the effect of God’s grace. Paul emphasized the Father’s initiative in extending His kindness and grace. Through His giving of His Son, God provided the means and motivation for lost sinners to become His children. He offers pardon to people who do not deserve forgiveness and reconciliation to those who were His enemies.

God’s love existed in eternity past, before He created the first human being. However, that love appeared, or was made manifest, in Jesus’ incarnation, sinless life, atoning death, and glorious resurrection. With the coming of Christ, hope invaded human history, not through the merit of the loved but by the kindness of the One who loves.
Paul’s simple statement, *he saved us*, contains the essence of salvation theology. First, it means we need saving. Without Christ, human beings are lost, separated from God because of sin (Isa. 59:2). Second, it declares we cannot save ourselves. We can do no *works of righteousness* to earn salvation. Our best efforts to achieve righteousness amount to filthy rags (Isa. 64:6).

Not by human efforts but *according to his mercy* God saves us. Through Christ, God made possible the *washing of regeneration*. Some commentators suggest the term *washing* references baptism, although most would not describe baptism as a means to salvation. Such a connection would contradict other New Testament teachings. (See Eph. 2:8-9.) Rather, Paul used the word *washing* as a metaphor to describe the cleansing power of *regeneration*.

The phrase *renewal by the Holy Spirit* involves a simultaneous, not a subsequent, aspect of salvation. We are not regenerated and then renewed. Both happen at the moment we are saved. The Holy Spirit renews our spirit as regeneration makes us alive in Christ (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13; 1 Pet. 3:18). As we continue in the Christian life, the Spirit renews our inner being even when our lives experience hardship (2 Cor. 4:16). He also renews our minds, transforming our lives (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23).

**VERSES 6-7**

Paul continued interchanging the phrases *God our Savior* and *Christ our Savior* as he had in earlier passages (Titus 1:3-4; 2:10,13). This demonstrates the dual truths that Christ the Son is truly God and that God the Father and God the Son are both instrumental in our salvation. Verse 6 continues the description of salvation begun in verse 5. In saving us, God *poured out his Spirit on us*. This statement contains great theological truths. First, it means that God takes the initiative in blessing believers with His Spirit. Second, we receive the Holy Spirit at salvation. Paul taught that anyone who did not have the Holy Spirit was not saved (Rom. 8:9). A third truth involves the way God gives His Spirit *abundantly*. He did not hold back on His gifting, but *poured out* His Spirit. Finally, the giving of the Spirit is made possible *through Jesus Christ*. We cannot earn the right to the Spirit or manufacture His gifts.

The phrase *so that* links verses 5-6 with the results in verse 7. Paul joined terms like *regeneration* and *renewal* with the word *justified* to describe what happens at salvation. By using the tense *having been justified*, Paul referred to something that had already happened in believers’ lives. We could not justify ourselves, but God justified us *by his grace* through Christ. Grace is unmerited favor, the extension of mercy to the sinner who has no hope apart from Jesus.

**Without Christ we are without hope.**

Salvation results in believers becoming *heirs* of God with the *hope of eternal life*. Without Christ we are without hope (Eph. 2:12). We can only receive hope and everlasting life by being born again into God’s family through faith in Christ.
How would you describe the difference between doing good works to gain salvation and doing good works because one has been granted salvation?

**DONE ON PURPOSE (TITUS 3:8-11)**

**VERSE 8**

8 This saying is trustworthy. I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed God might be careful to devote themselves to good works. These are good and profitable for everyone.

For the third time, Paul appealed to the Cretan Christians to *devote themselves to good works.* (See 2:14; 3:1.) Perhaps his repetition of this instruction related to the poor reputation held by some Cretans (1:10-12). More likely, Paul wanted these young believers to ground their faith in practical living that honors the Lord. He assured them *this saying was trustworthy* and necessary for the believers’ spiritual growth. *This saying* likely referred to verses 1-8, emphasizing the value of godly behavior.

Teaching about this issue was not optional for Titus. Paul urged him, *insist on these things.* The phrase *these things* points to the previous passage in which Paul listed the kinds of actions and attitudes that resulted in good deeds that glorified God. After all, the people who received Titus’s ministry were *those who have believed God.* As such, they needed to *devote themselves* to these good works. Titus’ instruction brings together the profession of faith and the practice of faith.

The phrase *these are good and profitable* refers either to good works or to those matters included in Paul’s desire for Titus to *insist on these things.* The word translated *good* includes moral benefit, while the term *profitable* relates to practical value. The godly qualities taught in verses 1-2 and the doctrinal truths of verses 3-7 produce good works. All of these combine to help *everyone,* an all-inclusive term for people in the church and society in general.

**VERSE 9**

9 But avoid foolish debates, genealogies, quarrels, and disputes about the law, because they are unprofitable and worthless.

Believers should *avoid* the ungodly distractions that threatened to divert them from lives focused on right beliefs and good behavior. Paul repeated four specific problems he had previously mentioned (Titus 1:10-16; 1 Tim. 1:3-6). Titus not only should shun these distractions in his ministry but should lead the Cretan believers follow his example.

*Foolish debates* do nothing to advance the gospel or to edify the saints. Therefore, Paul said avoid them. Other needless intrusions into ministry involved discussions about *genealogies.* Jewish heritage relied strongly on the ability to trace one’s ancestry back for many generations. Since the Cretans had a mixture of Greek and Jewish cultures, Grecian myths may have become intertwined with Jewish legends to produce syncretistic beliefs. Engaging these kinds of baseless debates was not only fruitless, but produced *quarrels* that hindered the Cretans’ clear witness to the truth of Christ.
The word *quarrels* could infer a general spirit of contention that produced conflict between the Cretan Christians and the people living around them. It also might be part of the *disputes about the law*. In either case, all of these diversions were *unprofitable and worthless*. The first of these twin terms emphasized the lack of positive benefit, while the second addressed their futility. Titus and his churches had more important matters that required their full attention.

VERSES 10-11
Paul believed a focused ministry was so important that Titus should not waste time on people who continued to sow discord. He instructed Titus to give a strict warning to any *divisive person*. However, if such an individual continued to be the source of conflict after one or two cautions, Titus was to reject that person.

Paul was not saying Titus should not seek repentance or salvation for these kinds of people. Instead, he wanted Titus not to allow them to disrupt his work or disturb the church. This caution was consistent with Jesus’ instructions for His disciples to move on from any place that did not receive them (Luke 9:5). Paul followed that example when he shook the dust from his shoes in witness against Jewish opponents who interfered with the Gentiles’ receiving the gospel (Acts 13:48-51).

Titus should know the nature of divisive persons. Paul used three phrases to describe them. Such an individual had *gone astray*. This phrase can also mean “perverted” or “corrupt.” Not only were they *sinning*, but they determined to continue in their sinning. Titus did not need to denounce these people, for they were *self-condemned* by their own deeds.

**Christians are to avoid being drawn into side issues that can harm the gospel message.**

Believers should not waste time with such people or be distracted by their divisive debates. Christians are to avoid being drawn into side issues that can harm the gospel message. Instead, they are to concentrate on honoring God through good works. Consequently, they can be deliberate in fulfilling God’s purpose through their lives.

**How does God’s purpose guide your priorities and determine your activities?**
LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

SHARE: As the group arrives, invite them to share something they did to help someone in the past week. Ask: How did what you did impact the other person?

ASK: How might a believer’s good works point others to Jesus? How can a believer communicate his or her motive for doing good works in a way that honors God? (PSG, p. 118)

CONTEXTUALIZE: Review the key points of Understand the Context (p. 134; PSG, p. 119). Key points could include: Paul’s letter focused on encouraging Titus to remain diligent to the ministry as a preacher and to lead the people to godliness. In chapter 2, the call to diligence required him to rebuke false teachers and encourage holiness in the church. Now in chapter 3, Paul discussed the church’s behavior toward those outside the church.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Call for a volunteer to read Titus 3:1-2, as the group listens for actions Paul called on Titus to encourage.

STATE: Paul directed Titus to remind the Cretan believers to be ready to do good works, placing others above themselves. Use Pack Item 11 (Handout: Titus: A Snapshot) to emphasize how Titus had proven himself worthy of the leadership entrusted to him.

ASK: How is a believer’s good behavior connected to the gospel message? (PSG, p. 119)

EXPLAIN: Paul advocated believers demonstrate submission in relationship to those in authority as well as to those in relationship to them (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). As believers showed the evidence of their transformation through Christ, they could build bridges to others, conveying His amazing grace toward all people.

ASK: Why was it important for believers to submit to the authority of government? How does being a responsible citizen impact how others view Christians? (PSG, p. 120) How can the church build bridges for the gospel and remain distinct?

TRANSITION: Since we’re called to love others, we must remember what we were saved from so we can empathize with others.

READ: Direct someone to read Titus 3:3-7, prompting the group to add to Paul’s list of encouragements to Titus.

STATE: Paul contrasted the believer before and after conversion. He emphasized that salvation is not based on works but on God’s mercy received through faith in Jesus. Call on a volunteer to write on a board as you reread the passage. Direct that person to record (1) the characteristics of someone before coming to Christ and (2) the characteristics of a person after becoming a Christian.
CONTRAST: Reread verse 3 to the group and stop at the conjunction of “But.” Explain how this is a description of the state of everyone “before Christ.” Then read the remainder of the passage (vv. 4-7) to emphasize the difference that comes from the mercy of God being applied to the believer because of Christ.

HIGHLIGHT: Verse 5 is a key verse that explicitly states how salvation is not about works but the mercy of God.

ASK: How would you describe the difference between doing good works to gain salvation and doing good works because one has been granted salvation? (PSG, p. 123)

EMPHASIZE: We are not called to do good things to be saved; rather, we do good things because we are saved and seek for others to know Jesus.

TRANSITION: For us as believers, there’s a purpose in good works that can help to further the gospel.

READ: Instruct a volunteer to read Titus 3:8-11, and add the remainder of Paul’s encouraging actions from these verses to the board.

STATE: Paul explained that good works, not debates and arguments, should characterize the believer’s behavior. The person who focuses on doing good works for God’s honor will not have time to get involved in wasteful debates and arguments.

CONTRAST: Review verses 8 and 9, highlighting what things Paul said are profitable and what things are unprofitable.

ASK: How might engaging with quarrels and controversies over trivialities get in the way of living out the gospel and honoring God through our works? (PSG, p. 125) From what Paul stated, when is the proper time to show grace to someone who is indifferent? When is the time to show godly discipline to that fellow believer?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

SHARE: Lead the group to share with a neighbor something from today’s study that gives them encouragement to demonstrate their faith through godly actions.

RESPOND: Present the Key Doctrine found on page 124 of the PSG (Justification): Justification is God’s gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ (Rom. 3:23-25). Allow time for silent reflection. Encourage the group to prayerfully consider where God is calling them to provide for someone in need.

CHALLENGE: Direct the group to the second question set under In My Context in the PSG (p. 126): Reflect on Titus 3:14 and the difference Christ has made in your life. How does your faith in Christ help you live a productive life? Memorize the verse.

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God that through His Son we can demonstrate our faith through godly actions and bring honor to Him.
PRACTICE

- During the week, challenge the group to do a good work for someone and encourage them to couple it with the gospel. Ask for reflection of the difference it made in seeking and sharing the gospel versus just simply doing something good for someone.
- Spend time praying specifically for the needs of your group.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)
To supplement Focus Attention, encourage participants to provide comparisons of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus as far as content and emphases. Use Pack Item 2 (Outlines of 1,2 Timothy; Titus) as a guide.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

- To supplement the teaching of Titus 3:5, direct the group to review the information on the inside front cover of the PSG. Emphasize that salvation comes through belief in Jesus alone and can’t be earned through works.
- To supplement the teaching of Titus 3:10, lead the group to compare Paul’s encouragement to Titus with the discipline measures provided by Jesus in Matthew 18.
- For further application of Titus 3:8-11, review Pack Item 9 (Handout: Models of Church Structure). Discuss ways your group can further support the leaders in your church in maintaining unity. Decide what specific actions need to be taken and commit to following through on them.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)
Direct the group to the third question set under In My Context in the PSG (p. 126): Discuss as a group ways of honoring God through addressing a need in your community. Identify steps the group can take to begin to address that need.

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA
Read the lyrics to the song, “In Christ Alone (My Hope Is Found),” by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend, to emphasize how salvation is available to us through the work of Christ.
These items are available on the CD-ROM in the Explore the Bible Leader Pack as PDFs to create your own handouts or media presentations for your group. Items marked as handouts are also available as reproducible masters on the CD-ROM included in the Explore the Bible Leader Pack.

PACK ITEM 1
Map: The World of Paul, Timothy, and Titus
Sessions 1-13
Use the map on page 155 or locate a map in a Bible atlas that shows the locations of Ephesus and Crete.

PACK ITEM 2
Outlines of 1,2 Timothy; Titus
Sessions 1-13
Refer to the outline printed on page 12 (PSG, p. 6).
PACK ITEM 3
Poster: Metaphors in Paul’s Letters
Sessions 2,8,9
Create a poster that defines metaphors and includes some of the metaphors Paul used in his letters (1 Tim. 2:5; 2 Tim. 2:3-6).

PACK ITEM 4
Poster: 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9
Sessions 3,11
Create a poster that lists 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Circle the similar characteristics. Highlight the qualities that are unique to each letter.

PACK ITEM 5
Poster: First-Century Heresies
Sessions 1,4,9,10
Write on a board or create a poster that gives simple definitions of legalism, antinomianism, and gnosticism.

PACK ITEM 6
Key Verse: 2 Timothy 2:15
Sessions 4,5,6,9,12
Create a poster that lists 2 Timothy 2:15: “Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn’t need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth.”

PACK ITEM 7
Handout: 1,2 Timothy; Titus Time Line
Sessions 3,7,10
Locate a study Bible with a time line of the major people and events in 1,2 Timothy; Titus (from AD 5–AD 67). Use it as a reference during this study.

PACK ITEM 8
Handout: Memory Verse Bookmark
Sessions 1-13
Make a list of these suggested memory verses to distribute to your group:

  • 1 Timothy 1:15
  • 1 Timothy 2:1
  • 1 Timothy 3:13
  • 1 Timothy 4:13
  • 1 Timothy 5:25
PACK ITEM 9
Handout: Models of Church Structure
Sessions 3, 8, 12, 13
Make a handout that defines common roles in the church according to Scripture. Include deacons, elders/bishops, and pastors.

PACK ITEM 10
Handout: Timothy: A Snapshot
Sessions 1, 5, 7, 8
Use a Bible dictionary or commentary to review Timothy's background and his relationship with Paul.

PACK ITEM 11
Handout: Titus: A Snapshot
Sessions 11, 13
Use a Bible dictionary or commentary to review Titus's background and his relationship with Paul.

PACK ITEM 12
Handout: Paul's Letters
Sessions 1, 7, 10, 11
Create a chart that lists Paul’s letters, his recipients, the dates written, and the theme of each letter. Paul’s letters include Galatians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Corinthians, Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians, 1–2 Timothy, and Titus.

PACK ITEM 13
Handout: First-Century Heresies
Sessions 1, 4, 9, 10
Use a Bible dictionary or commentary to create a handout that expounds on the information in Pack Item 5.

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Genealogies, Myths, and Old Wives’ Tales

Andy Chambers

Sound doctrine mattered to Paul. The Greco-Roman world in which Paul ministered brimmed with an endless variety of beliefs and practices that were contrary to the gospel. In the Pastoral Epistles, Paul warned against devotion to myths, endless genealogies, and old wives’ tales. What are these false teachings against which Paul sounded the alarm? Why was it necessary for Paul to warn against them? How does sound doctrine lead to a healthy faith? This article will attempt to answer these questions.

Genealogies, Myths, and Old Wives’ Tales—What Are They?

Paul told Timothy to command certain men not to devote themselves to “myths and endless genealogies” (1 Tim. 1:4) and to have nothing to do with “godless myths and old wives’ tales” (4:7; compare 2 Tim. 4:4). He described these false teachings to Titus as “Jewish myths” (Titus 1:14) and warned him to “avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments ... about the law” (3:9).

What was Paul referring to with these warnings? Paul did not explain the ideas of the false teachers. Apparently he did not want even to dignify their teaching by wasting time delineating their positions. Also the ideas of the false teachers are rarely mentioned outside of the Bible, which makes identification even more difficult. Some think Paul was referring to early Gnostic tendencies making inroads into the church. Others see Paul addressing an obsession among some Hellenistic Jews with mythological traditions about Old Testament characters and their genealogies. Timothy in Ephesus and Titus on Crete probably confronted
false teachings that contained a combination of Gnostic and Jewish elements. Both influences deserve consideration in an attempt to identify the false teachers.

Even though Gnosticism was not a full-blown movement until the second century AD, some early Gnostic tendencies may have been present in the mid-60s when Paul wrote the Pastoral Epistles. Gnostic systems of thought relied heavily on myths about the world’s origin. Paul may have been contrasting the nonhistorical character of these myths with the gospel, which was grounded in historical truth and the testimony of eyewitnesses (John 21:24; 1 Cor. 15:5-8; 2 Pet. 1:16). Gnostics rejected the entire material world and its Creator as evil. However, John declared that the Word became flesh and came to live in this material world (John 1:14; 1 John 4:2). God affirmed creation by entering the world and history through Jesus to save sinners (John 3:17; 1 Tim. 1:15). If Paul was referring to early Gnostic tendencies’ gaining a foothold in the church, he clearly stated that he would have none of it.

Early Gnostic thinking may have been present, but Paul also clearly identified the myths as Jewish in character (Titus 1:14). Fascination with mythological stories about Old Testament persons flourished among certain Hellenistic Jews in Paul’s day.

Some Hellenistic Jews were also enamored with tracing genealogies. One’s family line was important in Greece as it helped establish a person’s status. The false teachers Paul opposed likely obsessed over genealogies, especially when disagreement arose over which teacher to follow.

Precisely how much of the false teaching came from early Gnostics and how much came from Hellenistic Jews is unclear. However, what Paul thought of those teachings is quite clear. He said, “They do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm” (1 Tim. 1:7). Paul called them “warped and sinful” (Titus 3:11) and their teachings “godless myths and old wives’ tales” (1 Tim. 4:7).

“Myths and old wives’ tales” was a stock phrase in Paul’s day for identifying someone who talked endlessly but never said anything. Philo, the first-century BC Jewish philosopher, held a strikingly similar attitude toward the sceptics. He called these Greek philosophers “word-traffickers and word-eaters, who ... [act] as if happiness consisted in an interminable and profitless minuteness of accuracy in the matter of nouns and verbs, and not in the improving ... [of] moral character.”

**PAUL’S WARNINGS—WERE THEY NECESSARY?**

The warnings against false teachers were necessary for two reasons. First, the warnings were necessary because of what the false teaching produced—arguments and divisions (1 Tim. 1:4; Titus 3:9). The false teachers’ obsession with fruitless topics that led to controversy tended to undermine unity in the church. Jesus prayed that the church would be one (John 17:21-23). Further, a quarrelsome attitude was contrary to the unity Paul wanted to preserve (2 Tim. 2:23; Eph. 4:3). To be sure, some controversies are necessary, and some divisions inevitably happen, especially when the gospel is at stake. For instance, in the Book of Galatians Paul took on the Judaizers because their message of Jesus plus circumcision was a different gospel altogether (Gal. 1:6-9). Taking such a stand was necessary and would actually lead to unity rather than to division. Some people who are divisive, however, seem to enjoy conflict for conflict’s sake. Paul said divisive people should not have any influence in the church (Titus 3:10).

Second, the warnings were necessary because of what the false teachings caused people to ignore. The endless arguments and controversies kept the believers from God’s work,
which is done by faith (1 Tim. 1:4b). The arguments distracted the believers from focusing on the truths of the faith and the discipline that leads to godliness (4:6-7). When people spend all their time debating and obsessing over irrelevant matters, they have no time for what truly matters—sound doctrine that leads to a healthy faith.

**SOUND DOCTRINE AND A HEALTHY FAITH**

Paul challenged Timothy and Titus to teach what is in accord with sound doctrine (2 Tim. 1:13-14; Titus 1:9; 2:1). Sound doctrine is teaching that accurately conforms with the truth and message of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:20) and His apostles (Acts 2:42) and with the Old Testament (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Acts 17:11). Paul opposed the false teachers because he wanted truth taught. Why is sound doctrine so important to a healthy faith? Sound doctrine accurately communicates the truth about Jesus, and the Father sanctifies Christ’s followers by the truth (John 17:17). A person is transformed when he renews his mind according to truth (Rom. 12:2). When you hold to Christ’s teachings, His truth sets you free (John 8:31-32). Sound doctrine is what God uses to change people. Too often people see an emphasis on sound doctrine as too divisive. They would rather focus on deeds and reformation of character. However, Paul did not set doctrine and deeds against each other. He told Timothy to watch his life and doctrine closely—because doing this would evidence salvation both for himself and for his hearers (1 Tim. 4:16). Paul knew that both were essential.

The enemy has always worked to destroy the witness of the church. In the earliest church, one of his tools came wrapped as genealogies, myths, and old wives tales. Through the centuries the tools may have changed, but his intent has not. So, what protection does a believer have? That too has not changed through the centuries. A healthy faith is still based on the “the sound teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and ... the teaching that promotes godliness” (1 Tim. 6:3). This is crucial to personal change and a healthy faith. Unlike the fables, old wives tales, and myths that are temporal and meaningless, these teachings are eternal and provide hope, life, guidance, instruction, and comfort for those who follow our Lord.

1. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

This article originally appear in the Fall 2006 issue of Biblical Illustrator. Andy Chambers is vice president for student development and assistant professor of Bible, Missouri Baptist University, St. Louis, Missouri.
“Don’t discard me in my old age. As my strength fails, do not abandon me” (Ps. 71:9).

David’s prayer was that God not abandon him in his old age, lest his enemies think the Lord had forsaken him. David’s plea could easily echo the fear of many senior adults today—that their friends and family members not discard them in their old age. But has that always been a concern? How were older adults treated in the first century?

The earliest glimpses of the New Testament church indicate that Christians showed compassion for the needy among them. Believers sold their properties to provide food and other necessities for their members (Acts 2:44-47). Surely, some who received assistance were older adults.

Does the Bible record an effort, though, that specifically targeted older adults? Probably so. When the apostles learned that the Hellenistic widows were not receiving the daily serving of food, the early leaders enlarged their system of distribution by selecting seven men to make sure that they did not overlook any widows (Acts 6:1-6). Though not specifically stated, surely at least most of these widows would have been older. Further, in his first letter to Timothy, Paul called special attention to older men and women, instructing that they be treated with dignity. (See 1 Tim. 5:1-2.) He also instructed timothy that the church was to offer assistance to widows who were over sixty years of age (v. 9). How did the early church practices compare with how secular culture treated older adults in the first century?

FAMILY ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS

In the Greco-Roman world of the first century, family members were to provide complete and essential care for older relatives. Failure to do so could result in penalties and fines, and in Athens even the restriction of a person’s citizenship rights. Among the Romans, children had the legal responsibility of taking care of their aged parents. However, because of the high rate of infant and child mortality, life expectancy was only between twenty and thirty years. Only about six to eight percent of the empire’s population lived to be more than sixty.¹
The Romans expected adults who reached a senior age to remain useful in the society as long as they were in control of their faculties. The oldest living male of a household had total rights over his natural descendants, his wife, his adopted sons, and even the children of his sons. In principle, the rule of the oldest living male continued over his descendants regardless of how old those descendants were. That meant that a mature man or even an old man could still be regarded legally as the child of his living father and subject to his authority.

**SOCIETAL ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS**

Cultural records from the era reveal that Romans held ambivalent attitudes toward older individuals. Some art pieces and dramatic presentations disdainfully depicted the elderly as toothless and wrinkled men and women. In contrast, some images respectfully reveal older couples as being supportive and loving of each other in their old age. Additionally, the Romans typically respected and appreciated older senators for their wisdom. As a show of that respect, the law would allow aging senators to be excused from attending all the sessions of the senate if they so chose. Also, men over fifty-five could be excused from some public duties.

**CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS**

The differences between Christian attitudes and those of Greeks and Romans toward the elderly and the poor were stark. Christians were motivated to care for people because of the “Christian concepts of agape and the inherent worth of individuals who bore God’s image.” Believers’ conviction in personal and corporate benevolence led them to offer care during times of an epidemic outbreak, something that had been unheard of for a religious group in the classical world.

During the first two centuries, especially in times of epidemics, the systematic care that believers gave to those who were sick—be they Christian or pagan—seemingly had a powerful effect on public attitudes about Christianity. For instance, “during the plague of Cyprian [in AD 250], Christian churches, even though they were undergoing their first large-scale persecution, devised in several cities a program for the systematic care of the sick ... their activity contrasted with that of the pagans, who deserted the sick or threw the bodies of the dead out into the streets.” The compassion shown to the aged and the indigent who received nursing care from Christians was met with gratitude by pagans, resulting in many conversions to Christianity. Strong evidence indicates that the model of care the church practiced ultimately led to the creation of what some believe to be the earliest hospital open to the public, the Basileias, completed about AD 372.

Because the church ministered to the physical as well as the spiritual needs of people, barriers were crossed and hearts were opened to receive Christ. The power of love still works today. When believers accept each other as brothers and sisters and regard the elderly as mothers and fathers (1 Tim. 5:1-2), a healthy sense of belonging develops and continues through all the cycles of life. As the early church demonstrated, putting these ideals into practice impacts the world for Christ.

3. Ibid., 118.
4. Ibid., 121.
5. Ibid., 124-25.

This article originally appeared in the Spring 2013 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Dorman Laird is professor of religion emeritus, William Carey University, Hattiesburg, Mississippi.
Teaching the Next Generation

Mike Livingstone

An old photograph sits in a frame on my desk. Taken in 1959 when I was barely a year old, the black and white photo is of my father sitting at his desk in the pastor’s study. Visible on the desk are an open Bible and a world globe. I cherish this photo because it captures the greatest passions of my father’s life outside of his family—the Word of God, the local church, and world missions. I’m grateful for a father and mother who taught me—by word and example—to love God, treasure His Word, serve His church, and live on mission.

We know that Timothy had a mother and grandmother who influenced him toward faith in Christ. Paul saw in him the same “sincere faith” that thrived in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5). Passion for Jesus ran three generations deep in Timothy’s family.

Timothy’s life provides an example of teaching the next generation, while numerous Bible passages provide instruction for doing so, including Psalm 78. This psalm addresses the importance of the home and the vital role of parents and grandparents in leading the next generation to know, love, and serve God. This psalm, with other key passages, answers four critical questions regarding our responsibility to future generations: who, what, why, and how?

WHO?

Who’s responsible for teaching the next generation? Hear Psalm 78:5-6: “He [God] commanded our fathers to teach ... their children so that a future generation—children yet to be born—might know. They were to rise and tell their children.” Notice at least three, possibly four generations are mentioned in these verses—fathers, their children, the children yet to be born, and their children.

From the time God established His covenant with Israel, He commanded parents (dads are to take the lead) to teach their children, who in turn would teach their children, who then would teach their children. The same imperative is found in the New Testament, “bring [your children] up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4b). The responsibility to disciple children falls squarely on the shoulders of parents, and this requires a strong intentionality on our part.
WHAT?
What must we teach the next generation? Look again to Psalm 78, verse 5: “He established a testimony in Jacob and set up a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children.” The word testimony is sometimes used in the Old Testament to refer to the tablets of stone on which the Ten Commandments were written. (See Ex. 25:16.) This word relates to what God has required of His people. The word for law here is “torah” and means “instruction. In this context, it refers to the commandments in the Mosaic law. The emphasis in Psalm 78:5 is clear: it is God’s inspired and authoritative Word we must teach to our children.

WHY?
Psalm 78 answers the “why” question. “So that” in verses 6-7 means “to the end that” and points to the desired outcome of an action. We teach the next generation ...
• so that they “might know” God through His Word (v. 6);
• so that they might trust Him (“put their confidence in God,” v. 7);
• so that they would obey Him (“keep his commands,” v. 7). Stated negatively, so that they would not become another “stubborn and rebellious generation” who are not faithful to God (v. 8; see vv. 32-37).

The “why” question also finds an answer in 2 Timothy 1:5. We want our children and grandchildren to have a “sincere faith” (2 Tim. 1:5). The word sincere conveys an authenticity.

We seek to raise up faithful and passionate followers of Jesus Christ.

We teach so that the next generation will know, trust, and obey God. This desired outcome goes beyond just hoping our kids will stay out of trouble. It means we seek to raise up faithful and passionate followers of Jesus Christ.

HOW?
Look again to Psalm 78 for answers:
• Tell the stories of what God has done (“the praiseworthy acts of the LORD, his might, and the wondrous works he has performed,” v. 4);
• Teach what God requires of us (v. 5, “a testimony ... a law”);
• Warn against sinfulness (v. 8).

In Deuteronomy, God commands: “Repeat them [His words] to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ... Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates (Deut. 6:7-9).

Don’t miss this key point in the Deuteronomy 6 passage: before issuing the command to teach the next generation, God says, “These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart” (v. 6). Teaching involves explaining to our children what they observe in our lives.

And this brings us back to Timothy. His “sincere faith” first “lived in” his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5). It is by word and example we will teach the next generation to be passionate followers of Jesus Christ.

Mike Livingstone is a content editor at LifeWay for Explore the Bible resources.
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### COMING NEXT QUARTER

#### EPHESIANS

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