1, 2 Timothy; Titus

Summer 2019 > CSB
Johnny Hunt, General Editor

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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
MEET THE WRITER

Dean Register wrote this study of 1,2 Timothy and Titus. Dr. Register is the senior pastor of Crosspoint Community Church (SBC) in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He holds four degrees, including a Doctor of Theology degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.
A WORD FROM THE GENERAL EDITOR

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.

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OUTLINES 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)
INTRODUCTION TO 1, 2 TIMOTHY; TITUS

BACKGROUND
Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus resound with passion for the gospel, priorities for church leadership, prescriptions against false teaching, and practical guidelines for godly living. The apostle became acquainted with Timothy and Titus during his first and second missionary journeys. He referred to both as sons in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4). Paul’s affection and confidence in them was demonstrated by the responsibilities he gave them. Timothy was assigned leadership for churches in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:2), Corinth (Acts 18:5), and Macedonia (Acts 19:22). Titus was utilized as a troubleshooter to resolve difficulties and strengthen churches in Corinth (2 Cor. 8:6, 18), Dalmatia (2 Tim. 4:10), and Crete (Titus 1:5). Timothy’s primary area of ministry was Ephesus, while Titus’s primary ministry occurred in Crete.

DATE
Most likely Paul wrote First Timothy during his ministry in the region of Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3), as Timothy ministered in Ephesus, probably around AD 63. This date falls between his two imprisonments in Rome. Paul probably wrote his letter to Titus around AD 63-64 from Nicopolis, when he left Titus in Crete. Second Timothy states that Paul was in prison and was prepared for execution (2 Tim. 4:6-8). In AD 64, the great fire of Rome occurred and Nero found an opportunity to falsely blame the Christ-followers in and around the city. Paul wrote Second Timothy perhaps around AD 66, shortly before his execution.

PURPOSE
There was a three-fold purpose in Paul’s message to Timothy and Titus:
• He instructed and advised them to refute the false teaching that threatened the health and mission of the churches in Ephesus and Crete.

• He encouraged them to select godly leaders to minister effectively to the congregations.

• He purposefully emphasized the union of belief and behavior. Sound doctrine is to be accentuated by a Christlike lifestyle.
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.
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As recipients of God’s grace, believers are entrusted with the truth of the gospel message.

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.

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?
UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

1 TIMOTHY 1:3-17
Paul met Timothy on a second missionary journey as he traveled through Lystra (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy was highly esteemed among the followers of Christ in the area around Lystra and Derbe. Consequently, Paul invited him to join his missionary team as they spread the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. Several years later, Paul trusted Timothy to accomplish the pastoral work in Ephesus and to confront false teachers who were threatening the church.

Ephesus was one of the foremost cities in the Empire, ranking in status just below Rome and Athens. The city was known for its idolatrous worship in the temple of Artemis (also called the temple of Diana). The worship of Diana provided a lucrative business among silversmiths who crafted idols and other objects of worship. The Roman deity Diana was the counterpart of the Greek goddess Artemis. She was a nature and fertility deity invoked for hunting and pregnancy. During Paul’s lengthy ministry in Ephesus, a leader among the silversmiths named Demetrius organized a resistance movement against Paul’s preaching (Acts 19:21-41). Demetrius rightly argued that Paul preached against idolatry and objects crafted by hand to serve as gods. Their real fear, however, was financial and nationalistic. If people believed the gospel that Paul preached, then they would cease their practice of idolatry. If the practice of idolatry stopped, then profit sales would plunge and Diana would no longer be the main attraction for devotees throughout Asia Minor. Consequently, a riot occurred and the city was filled with confusion while the people shouted, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians” for two hours (Acts 19:28,34).

Timothy needed to be strong and courageous in such a cosmopolitan culture steeped in pagan idolatry and sexual immorality. Paul charged him with the task of refuting teachers at Ephesus who spread deviant doctrines contrary to the true gospel.

Read 1 Timothy 1:3-17. How would you contrast the false teachers with the true teachers of the gospel?
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).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

ACCOUNTABLE (1 TIM. 1:3-7)

3 As I urged you when I went to Macedonia, remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach false doctrine 4 or to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies. These promote empty speculations rather than God’s plan, which operates by faith. 5 Now the goal of our instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. 6 Some have departed from these and turned aside to fruitless discussion. 7 They want to be teachers of the law, although they don’t understand what they are saying or what they are insisting on.

VERSES 3-4

Paul urged Timothy to stay in Ephesus while he traveled north to minister in Macedonia. He entrusted to Timothy the task of faithfully teaching the gospel message in a church that was susceptible to deception and doctrinal heresy. The challenge was clear: instruct certain people not to teach false doctrine. Serious perversions of the gospel threatened not only the health of the church but also the message of salvation. Years earlier, Paul had warned the Ephesian church leaders that false teachers would rise up within the church and lure believers away by deviant doctrines (Acts 20:29-30).

Paul identified the deviant doctrines as myths and endless genealogies. False teachers considered genealogies and myths equal in
importance to the gospel message. The tragic result of deviant doctrines was the promotion of empty speculations. Irrelevant and trivial conjecture sidelined the teaching of the gospel. This truth flashes like a caution signal for the church today. It warns us to avoid two equal and opposite pitfalls: (1) the temptation of enticing doctrine unsubstantiated by God’s Word and (2) the seductive lure of pointless speculations that consume our time and energy at the expense of sharing the gospel.

**VERSE 5**

Paul reminded Timothy about the aim of gospel teaching. The goal was love. Unlike the crafty false teachers who were motivated by selfishness, Paul emphasized the necessity of sacrificial love. He chose the Greek word *agape* to express self-denying devotion to God that overflowed toward others.

Paul cited three qualities of this love. First, it flowed from a pure heart. Jesus purifies believers at conversion. However, believers are also empowered to embrace purity as they grow in grace daily. Love from a pure heart enhances right relationships. A second quality of love is a good conscience. A conscience clouded by pride and prejudice impairs love, but a clean conscience edifies others and strengthens relationships. A third quality is a sincere faith. The adjective sincere points to a faith free from hypocrisy.

**VERSES 6-7**

The false teachers had strayed from genuine love. The inevitable result was fruitless discussion. Their teaching omitted the essential content of the gospel and led to unproductive conversations.

These false teachers aspired to be teachers of the law but were clueless about the meaning and purpose of the law. They steered listeners away from the truth of God’s Word. Moreover, they missed the objective of the Old Testament to point to Jesus as Messiah. Teachers and preachers should allow nothing to obscure the faithful interpretation and communication of God’s saving work through Christ.

*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?*  

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

8 But we know that the law is good, provided one uses it legitimately.
9 We know that the law is not meant for a righteous person, but for the lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinful, for the unholy and irreverent, for those who kill their fathers and mothers, for murderers, 10 for the sexually immoral and homosexuals, for slave traders, liars, perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching 11 that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which was entrusted to me.

VERSES 8-11

Paul explained that the law is good when used legitimately. First, it reflected God’s will. It was given to show how God wanted His people to live. Second, the law served as God’s plumb line. It was designed to reveal if we are correctly aligned with Him. A plumb line cannot make a crooked wall straight, however. The law could not make us straight before God. Third, the law pointed to the Savior who fulfilled it perfectly without sin.

How does the law point to our need for a Savior? How does Jesus provide what the law could not?

God’s law operated like a bright light that exposed the filth hidden by darkness. Paul illustrated this point by citing a list of sins prohibited in the Ten Commandments. The first three pairs of sins blatantly violated the first four commandments. The lawless and rebellious referred to people who abandoned respect for God and lived without moral restraint. The ungodly and sinful defied righteousness and pursued idols of their making. The unholy and irreverent belittled God’s name and mocked His character. Those who kill their fathers and mothers violated the fifth and sixth commandments.

The sexually immoral referred to transgressions of the seventh commandment regarding adultery. Homosexuality falls under the category of sexual immorality. God’s Word sanctions sexual activity only within the marriage covenant between a biological male and female. Slave traders, liars, and perjurers broadly parallel the eighth, ninth, and tenth commandments.
Paul said that the gospel had been *entrusted* to him. Unlike the self-appointed teachers who spread a false message, Paul stood courageously on the truth of the gospel. Not only was the gospel entrusted to Paul, it is also entrusted to every follower of Christ.

**KEY DOCTRINE: Man**

Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin (1 Cor. 15:21-22).

**IN RESPONSE TO GOD’S GRACE (1 TIM. 1:12-17)**

12 I give thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me, because he considered me faithful, appointing me to the ministry — 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man. But I received mercy because I acted out of ignorance in unbelief, 14 and the grace of our Lord overflowed, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 15 This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”— and I am the worst of them. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life. 17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

**VERSES 12-14**

Paul lived with profound gratitude to the Lord. He expressed his adoration by using all three titles of the Savior. The term *Christ* represented His full deity as the anointed Messiah. The name *Jesus* represented His full humanity, and the term *Lord* underscored His sovereignty as Master of all creation.

Paul was deeply thankful that Jesus *strengthened* him. The Lord’s strength enabled Paul to share the gospel despite hardships and sustained Paul during times of suffering. Timothy must have been keenly aware that Paul’s message was written from the squalor of a Roman prison as a testimony to the Lord’s enduring grace.
Paul also expressed gratitude because Jesus considered him \textit{faithful}. Paul was stating that by grace he was empowered to be trustworthy. He also gave thanks for his appointment to \textit{ministry}. He gratefully rejoiced that the Lord had given him the privilege to serve in the mission of proclaiming the gospel. Paul believed he was a steward. He never considered ministry to be a title he earned. It was a gift to be stewarded and utilized as the Lord intended.

Every salvation story is written against the stained backdrop of sin. Paul didn’t flinch to tell his story of having once been \textit{a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man}. As \textit{a blasphemer}, Paul rejected Jesus and persuaded others to do the same. Paul said also that he was a \textit{persecutor}. He tried to destroy Christians (Acts 8:3) and persecuted them to their death (Acts 22:4). Furthermore, he personified arrogance and insolence. He behaved like a bully taunting frightened believers.

Paul was delivered from his \textit{ignorance} and \textit{unbelief} because he was shown \textit{mercy}. He was a highly intellectual and devoted Pharisee, but he was ignorant about the true identity of Jesus. His ignorance was not an excuse to justify his past, but evidence of his need for God’s mercy. Mercy and \textit{grace} are twin attributes of God’s character, but they provide a slightly different effect.

Grace is God giving us what we don’t deserve: salvation and eternity with Him. Mercy is God withholding from us what we do deserve: His wrath and eternity without Him. Paul testified that the Lord’s grace overflowed his life. It was like a gushing river of love that surged by faith into his dry and parched soul.

\textit{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?}

\textbf{VERSES 15-17}

The only place in the New Testament where Paul uses the phrase \textit{this saying is trustworthy} is in his epistles to Timothy and Titus. This is the first of five “trustworthy” statements that declare a non-negotiable truth to be embraced. The statement reveals the reason
for Jesus’ coming to earth: to save sinners. His ultimate and primary mission was salvation. Jesus was, is, and always will be the only hope for a sinful world. He alone provides both abundant life and eternal life to all who repent and trust Him.

Paul freely acknowledged that among sinners he was the worst of them. We never truly see God’s grace as amazing until we see our sin as disgusting and abhorrent. When we dare to look into the foul cesspool of our hearts and admit the sin that so easily captivates us, we stand beside Paul to exclaim, “That’s me!” Notice that Paul expressed the reason for his salvation was to serve as an example of the extravagant patience of Christ to all others who might believe in him for eternal life. Essentially, Paul’s point was this: if Jesus would and could save someone like him, given who he was and what he did, then Jesus is able to save anyone.

As he continued reflecting on the saving grace of God in Christ, Paul erupted in praise. He stacked attribute upon attribute and called God the King eternal. This was a description of God as the supreme ruler for all time. He also referred to God as immortal. He is the one who never deteriorates or decays when everything else fades into obscurity. Paul characterized God as invisible and as the only God. God is Spirit, but He revealed Himself in Jesus, and He has no competitor or rival. Paul responded to this truth by declaring God alone as being worthy of all honor and glory.

How did Paul’s life become an exhibit of God’s grace and mercy?

BIBLE SKILL: Reading a related passage to gain insight
Read Romans 5:20–6:4 and 7:14-25. Put yourself in Paul’s shoes as you consider your own life. What is your emotional reaction to awareness of sin? How does it produce humility and a deep sense of need for God’s grace? How does it cause you to be more humble toward other people? Write a prayer expressing your gratitude and commitment to the Lord for His grace.
IN MY CONTEXT

• Teachers are accountable to the church and God.
• Salvation is found only through faith in Jesus.
• Believers are an exhibit of God’s grace and mercy for all to see.

*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.*

*Reflect on 1 Timothy 1:15. Quote the verse while looking at a photo of yourself and record your emotions. Memorize the verse.*

*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)?*

Prayer Needs
ON MISSION

Believers are to be mindful of how they represent God in this world.

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-15

Everywhere we go, someone is watching us. A family member, a child, a friend, a coworker—someone is watching. This watching is not being done in some weird way, but it’s done to see how we do things, especially if we claim to be Christians. 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. Jesus gives us an opportunity to influence others for Him by representing Him in this world.

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 (chap. 1) and instructions about qualifications for pastors and deacons (chap. 3), Paul urged Timothy to lead the Ephesian believers to develop lifestyles that would impact their community for Christ. From prayer and worship to the way they dressed and behaved, Ephesian believers had opportunities for witnessing to people caught up in the pagan culture of their city.

Setting a godly example as representatives of Christ would be essential for both men and women in the church. Paul expected men to practice godliness. Effective prayer was connected to the pursuit of holiness. Women, likewise, were challenged to pursue godliness by the way they presented themselves to others. The Temple of Diana threw a licentious shadow over the culture of Ephesus. Prostitutes would dress provocatively to lure men into immorality. Paul did not want the female followers of Christ to imitate such scandalous attire. Modesty was the style of dress for women who represented Christ.

Furthermore, Paul gave guidelines regarding male and female roles. Both men and women were to practice submission to Christ. Paul honored women by treating them as equally capable as men of learning. However, given the Ephesian culture and his missionary mindset, he instructed them to exercise restraint by demonstrating a quiet demeanor. A boisterous and contentious disposition, such as some false teachers advocated, was not an appropriate testimony for a woman fully surrendered to Christ. Moreover, Paul did not want women to exert a domineering and distasteful authority that would hinder the spread of the gospel.

Godly lifestyles and faithful worship would authenticate the faith the Ephesians proclaimed. By any and all means, they were on mission to Ephesus and beyond.

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-15, circling the commands given by Paul. How do these commands relate to each other?
EXPLORE THE TEXT

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

First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 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.

VERSES 1-2

Paul urged Timothy to make prayer a priority in his life and in the church. The phrase *first of all* emphasized the essential role of prayer. The term *petitions* denoted specific requests to God about spiritual needs. The word *prayers* was a comprehensive expression for all types of appeals to God. *Intercessions* indicated an intervention on behalf of someone while *thanksgivings* expressed the profound gratitude to God for His grace and goodness. Moreover, the scope of prayer was *made for everyone.*

While prayers were to be offered for everyone, *kings* and those *in authority* stood in special need because of the responsibility they carried and the influence they exercised. This exhortation from Paul was given at a time when Nero wielded uncontested power in Rome. As the tide of persecution rose, it was imperative to pray for governing officials. God can achieve more through our prayers for leaders than we can achieve through our own plans regarding them.

VERSES 3-4

The phrase *this is good* is related to the practice of prayer for all kinds of people. The reason it is good is because *it pleases God our Savior.* God is pleased when believers pray for everyone to know Him as Savior. He *wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* This passage does not teach that all people will be saved. Salvation is forced upon no one but is available to everyone by God’s grace through faith. God offers salvation to everyone without distinction of human
status. The verb *wants* (v. 4) expresses God’s desire and delight. His desire is not a type of despotic coercion. He delights to extend a grace-drenched invitation. God, through His sovereignty, allows men and women the opportunity to receive or reject it.

**VERSES 5-7**

The statement *there is one God* declares the uniqueness of God. It served as a rebuke to the plurality of idols in Ephesus. God is the one and only God who has no rival. Because He is the one God, He alone can provide the way of salvation through His Son, our Savior. Consequently, there is *one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus*. A mediator is someone in the middle who acts to reconcile two parties into a relationship that would not otherwise exist. Sinful humanity could not properly relate to a holy God unless there was a mediator who was both fully human and fully God. Jesus uniquely fulfilled this purpose.

Jesus died an atoning death for our sin. The term *ransom* describes a payment for setting captives free. Jesus’ death paid the price to release us from the penalty of death and sin. The term *gave* points to His voluntary surrender. He offered Himself at the cross as our substitute by dying for sin on our behalf. Once again, the extent of His salvation included *all* who would respond to Him by faith. None are denied reconciliation with God except those who deny their need of His forgiveness and refuse His grace through Christ Jesus.

Similarly, Paul affirmed his testimony to the gospel message as a man who was *appointed* by Christ for a three-fold mission. First, he was a *herald*. As the term denotes, Paul was someone proclaiming to everyone a crucial message about Jesus’ victory. Second, Paul was an *apostle*. He was one commissioned by the Lord and sent out with full authority to exercise a task. Third, Paul was a *teacher* instructing the Gentiles in faith and truth. The inclusion of Gentiles indicated that the scope of the gospel was to everyone and was not limited to the Jews. Therefore, Paul reinforced the necessity of praying for all people because all people need to hear the truth regarding Jesus and need to place their faith in Him.

*How should the gospel’s offer to all people impact how we pray?*
KEY DOCTRINE: Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation (Gen. 1:26-30).

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

Therefore, I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument.

VERSE 8

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. Consequently, Paul challenged men to pray. The word therefore resumes the previous emphasis on prayer. In view of the threats against the church from false teachers inside and antagonists outside, Paul wanted men to pray whenever and wherever believers gathered for worship.

Our passion for Christ can be gauged by our commitment to His mission.

The phrase lifting up holy hands referred more to purity of the heart than to posture of the body. A man who passionately strives to honor God can pray effectively with hands folded or hands lifted. Although standing with hands outstretched toward heaven was a customary practice for prayer, Paul specified that it was to be done without anger or argument. A church full of men holding resentment toward one another could not advance the mission of Christ. Men who indulged in arguing with one another rather than praying for each other stifled the spread of the gospel.

How can anger influence a person’s prayer requests? How does anger get in the way of prayer?
SUPPORTED BY GODLY WOMEN  (1 TIM. 2:9-15)

9 Also, the women are to dress themselves in modest clothing, with decency and good sense, not with elaborate hairstyles, gold, pearls, or expensive apparel, but with good works, as is proper for women who profess to worship God. 11 A woman is to learn quietly with full submission. 12 I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; instead, she is to remain quiet. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and transgressed. 15 But she will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with good sense.

VERSES 9-10
Women and men are both created in the image of God and hold equal status before Him. God created them to hold different but no less important roles according to His purpose. Both men and women are to demonstrate godliness.

Modest clothing minimized provocative attire as it maximized decency and good sense for the sake of making the gospel known and glorifying the Lord. Expensive clothing and other accessories such as elaborate hairstyles, gold, and pearls likewise conveyed the wrong impression in Ephesian culture. The fact that some of the women could adorn themselves with gold and pearls indicated a high degree of wealth that was flaunted.

Paul wanted women to adorn themselves with good works. Many pagan women in Ephesus adorned themselves seductively. By contrast, Paul wanted women who had been transformed by Christ to affirm the inward reality of their salvation by their outward appearance and faithful deeds. Modesty and self-control are appropriate guidelines for all believers.

How does clothing reveal what people feel about themselves? How can a person’s clothing choices be a positive influence for Christ? Does it really matter? Explain.
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. Paul encouraged women to learn. This involved a radical departure from the first-century stigma against women and signaled a new freedom for all women who had become Christians. Some scholars see the word quietly as a reference to maintaining a quiet attitude as opposed to a quarrelsome spirit. The phrase full submission emphasized a willingness to be taught and to learn. Paul honored women as teachable members of the church, equally as capable as men to study and learn God’s Word.

Much of the unnecessary controversy surrounding this verse has centered on the word submission. Jesus modeled submission, and was no less God the Son because He submitted to the Father. Moreover, women played a crucial role in Jesus’ ministry. They followed Jesus courageously. The Gospels reveal that they were the last to leave Jesus on crucifixion Friday and the first to arrive at the tomb on resurrection Sunday. Without women fulfilling their God-assigned role, men would be hindered in their God-assigned tasks as spiritual leaders in the home and the church.

We can identify at least two reasons for Paul’s prohibition, I do not allow a woman to teach. First, within the context of worship Paul knew the problems posed by the false teachers and the temptation for the women to misuse their new freedom. Some of the false teachers may have stirred women to claim for themselves a more prominent standing in the church. Paul instructed Timothy not to allow anyone to serve in a leadership position, including newly saved women, who were not spiritually mature in their faith.

A second reason Paul did not want a woman to teach was because the position and influence of a teacher in first-century churches was equated with the office of the pastor, a biblical role for men. The expression have authority referred to a domineering and abusive disposition toward someone. Such an attitude should never be displayed by any teacher, whether by a woman or a man.

In verses 13-15, Paul appealed to creation as the theological basis of gender roles (Gen. 2:18). God established the divine order of male and female before sin entered the world. The fact that Adam was formed first indicated that God placed upon Adam a mantle of authority without superiority. Adam’s role of leadership did not
mean he was better than Eve. Eve’s role of submission did not mean she was less than Adam. Paul intended for his instruction to correct the twisted interpretation of the creation account proposed by some Ephesian women that championed female dominance in the church.

The statement, *Adam was not deceived*, did not mean that Adam was less guilty. Adam’s sin was not characterized as deception because God had plainly instructed him about the fruit of the tree he must not eat. His sin was one of defiance. He knew better. He chose to disobey. In Paul’s letter to the Romans he placed the primary blame for humanity’s sinful nature on Adam (Rom. 5:12-21).

There is no indication that Eve had been instructed about the tree although Adam may have done so. Her sin was characterized as deception because she listened to Satan, believed his lies, and broke God’s command.

Paul’s final statement appears to suggest salvation for women comes through *childbearing*. This interpretation would be in conflict with countless passages dealing with salvation coming through Christ alone. Paul had just given some restrictive guidance to the women in the church, then quickly affirmed the positive nature of female believers. Their roles, particularly as mothers, were invaluable both to the church and the family. The faith of godly women has led many children to trust and love Christ.

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. Women and men are collaborators with Christ in taking His gospel mission to the world.

**BIBLE SKILL: Use a concordance and Bible dictionary.**

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?
IN MY CONTEXT

• Believers are to pray with a focus on the lost.
• Godly men are to set the example when it comes to praying for others.
• Godly women are mindful of how their dress and actions impact the witness of the church.

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?

Reflect on your attitude and motives for prayer. What changes do you need to make to follow in greater ways the directives about prayer in this passage?

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.

Prayer Needs
Godly leaders are needed to lead healthy churches.

**1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13**

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.

*What requirements do you value the most when it comes to church leaders? Why do you include each requirement?*
UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13; TITUS 1:6-9
In the previous chapter, Paul provided instruction to men and women in the church regarding what they should do and how they should live. In 1 Timothy 3 he offered instruction about what church leaders must be and their qualifications for service.

False teachers were creating instability in the church by their spurious doctrine. They were undermining the confidence of believers. Moreover, the false teachers were bringing the gospel into disrepute. The church was floundering and desperately needed godly leadership.

Consequently, Paul addressed the need for qualified individuals to serve as pastors and deacons. First, he expressed God’s requirement for overseers. The words overseer and elder are interchangeable terms for the role of pastor. The requirements did not give a job description for the pastor, but they do indicate the character qualities of a person who would serve in that position (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9).

In a similar manner, deacons, their wives, as well as other ladies who served the church were expected to uphold a high standard of godliness and faithfulness in keeping with their positions (1 Tim. 3:7-13).

The qualifications were designed to encourage the right persons to serve and discourage the wrong persons from leadership.

As you read 1 Timothy 3:1-13, compare and contrast the list of qualifications for a pastor and a deacon. What do the similar qualifications reveal about the expectations for all believers?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

A PASTOR’S HEART (1 TIM. 3:1)

1 This saying is trustworthy: “If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work.”
VERSE 1

There is a link between godly pastors and healthy churches. God intended for His churches to have pastors, and He intended for His pastors to meet holy qualifications that reflect His heart. This was a trustworthy saying because the life and work of a pastor is a sacred responsibility that carries eternal implications. The trustworthiness in this context focused on the character and competency of anyone who aspires to be a pastor.

Aspiring to be a spiritual leader is worthwhile, but there can be a big gap between aspiration and qualification. Therefore, Paul emphasized the qualifications for serving as a pastor. The word overseer described a pastor as someone who directs and oversees the church’s ministry. Paul was not advocating a church hierarchy or a governing episcopacy. Throughout the New Testament, the terms “pastor,” “overseer,” “elder,” and “bishop” are used synonymously. Two examples highlight the interchangeable nature of the terms. First, Paul requested a meeting with the “elders” of Ephesus, but when he exhorted them he addressed them as “overseers” (Acts 21:28). Second, Peter appealed to the “elders” and encouraged them as overseers of the flock (1 Pet. 5:1-2).

Paul reminded Timothy that serving as a pastor was a noble work. It was an honorable calling from God that required an honorable life as a testimony to His grace. To represent the Savior in the task of spreading the gospel and leading His church is a rigorous responsibility that should never be regarded lightly. A pastor’s heart must beat in rhythm with the Savior’s mission while leading believers to reach the unsaved and equip the saved.

How was Paul’s affirmation of those desiring to be a pastor also an affirmation of Timothy? Why is it important for every believer to seriously consider the role God wants him or her to play in His work?

KEY DOCTRINE: The Church

While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture (1 Tim. 3:2).
A PASTOR’S CHARACTER (1 TIM. 3:2-7)

2 An overseer, therefore, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,3 not an excessive drinker, not a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome, not greedy. 4 He must manage his own household competently and have his children under control with all dignity. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of God’s church?) 6 He must not be a new convert, or he might become conceited and incur the same condemnation as the devil. 7 Furthermore, he must have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he does not fall into disgrace and the devil’s trap.

VERSES 2-3

Spiritual leadership necessitates exemplary behavior. The expression above reproach does not mean sinless perfection. Instead, it depicts the virtuous life of a redeemed individual. A pastor is expected not only to believe and preach the gospel but also to behave and practice the gospel. In significant ways, the call to live a life above reproach was spelled out in Paul’s list of behavioral virtues.

The first key virtue is marital fidelity. The statement the husband of one wife translates a Greek phrase that is literally “a one-woman man.” In interpreting what this means and how it applies, several options exist. One option is that a polygamist cannot serve as pastor. This is certainly true. However, polygamy was rare among Jews and Gentiles in Ephesus. A second option is that a single man should not be a pastor. Yet Paul’s praise for singleness and his own status as unmarried appears to allow a single man to serve as pastor. A third and common approach would understand this passage to mean the pastor should not be divorced and remarried. It is not certain Paul had divorce in mind here since he did not use the Greek word meaning divorce. It is scripturally reasonable to understand the husband of one wife statement as referring to a man who is faithfully and unquestionably devoted to his wife and that his covenant of marriage presents a magnetic witness for Christ.

Self-controlled points to a man who possesses the ability to refrain from making rash decisions or living irresponsibly. Sensible describes one who is reasonable in human interactions.
A person who lives in this manner is **respectable**. Being **hospitable** includes the practice of welcoming others into your home and also the attitude of cordiality.

Another essential quality for a pastor was an ability to communicate God’s Word. The phrase **able to teach** pointed to the effective explanation of doctrinal truths and the skillful refutation of heretical ideas. An able teacher was one who possessed a spirit-endowed gift to connect with listeners and impart Scripture in a manner that enabled them to understand and apply God’s message.

Four more character qualities are listed in verse 3. Each one is stated as a prohibition to emphasize behavior that a pastor should avoid. The phrase **not an excessive drinker** should not be understood as permission for pastors to consume alcoholic beverages. Strong arguments can be made for total abstinence when we consider the tragedies that results from drinking. (See Prov. 20:1.)

The statements **not a bully** and **not quarrelsome** stood in sharp contrast to the false teachers at Ephesus who were known to be divisive and combative. A quarrelsome individual rarely is a productive leader. A pastor who is **gentle** serves with humility rather than harshness.

**A church should take good care of its pastor and his family.**

Paul’s admonition for a pastor not to be **greedy** should not be misused by a church as an excuse for failing to provide financially for their pastors. A church should take good care of its pastor and his family.

**What dangers do churches face when they compromise these biblical qualifications for leaders?**

**VERSES 4-7**

The word **manage** denotes the exercise of discipline and authority immersed in compassion. When a pastor leads well on the home front, he demonstrates that he can **take care of God’s church**. By modeling integrity on a small scale in a family, a pastor proves his capability of spiritual leadership on a larger scale like a church.
Pride is an obstacle for any Christian but can be especially so for a pastor. Consequently, Paul argued that the pastor must not be a new convert. A believer needs a certain level of biblical knowledge and spiritual maturity before assuming the role of pastor.

At the other extreme from pride is disgrace. Paul indicated it was essential for a potential pastor to have a good reputation among outsiders by living in an undeniably Christlike manner. Otherwise, unbelievers could disparage the name of Christ.

How can you help your pastor consistently achieve these qualities?

BIBLE SKILL: Comparing similar passages

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.

A DEACON’S CHARACTER (1 TIM. 3:8-13)

Deacons, likewise, should be worthy of respect, not hypocritical, not drinking a lot of wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. They must also be tested first; if they prove blameless, then they can serve as deacons. Wives, too, must be worthy of respect, not slanderers, self-controlled, faithful in everything. Deacons are to be
husbands of one wife, managing their children and their own households competently. 13 For those who have served well as deacons acquire a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

**VERSES 8-10**

The word *deacon* means “one who serves.” Although the men in Acts 6:1-6 were not called deacons, they functioned as servants to meet needs so that the apostles could focus on prayer and preaching. Those men may be regarded as forerunners of deacons.

A deacon’s character must be *worthy of respect*. This expression combines the idea of earnestness and dignity. A deacon was not to be glib or flippant. A man assuming the position of a deacon in a church would need to be known for his godliness.

Second, a deacon must not be *hypocritical*. Literally, this word means he must not be guilty of double talk. He cannot say one thing to one person and something else to another. Deacons must be sincere and maintain integrity in their interactions. They cannot put forth a righteous image at church while behaving like unbelievers outside of church. Deacons, like pastors, should also be known for their self-control in regard to *drinking* and *money*.

In verse 9 Paul turned the focus from behavior to belief. A deacon should hold firmly to the *mystery of the faith* in Christ. The word *holding* means not only to possess, but also to preserve. The word *mystery* referred to truths previously hidden but now revealed through Christ.

According to verse 10, a deacon should not be put into his role hastily. To be *tested* involved an observation and examination of belief and behavior. The general evaluation of being proved *blameless* mirrors the pastor’s qualification to be so irreproachable in ethical demeanor that no charge against him could be proven legitimate.

**VERSE 11**

Whether Paul referred to the *wives* of deacons or women in general is unclear. Since Paul was addressing deacons, the context would suggest Paul had in mind here the wives of deacons. Nevertheless, the application applies to every woman in the church. Four requirements are needed.
First, she was to **be worthy of respect.** Godly behavior is to be expected of all church members, regardless of role or gender. Second, she is to avoid being an accuser or slanderer. The word *slanderers* is derived from a word designating the devil, because he is one who makes accusations falsely. She must also be **self-controlled.** In summary, she must be **faithful in everything,** whether it is her family or her service in the church. Reliable is an appropriate synonym for *faithful.*

**Godly behavior is to be expected of all church members, regardless of role or gender.**

**VERSE 12**
Paul changed the focus back to the character of *deacons.* Identical to the requirement for a pastor, Paul pointed out the necessity of a Christ-centered home life for a deacon. Like a pastor, a deacon must be a one-woman man, upholding God’s ideal for marriage. Furthermore, he must set a worthy example so that his *children* may have a clear comprehension of how a godly man lives.

**VERSE 13**
Quite likely, false teachers in Ephesus had weakened respect for church leaders and their roles. Consequently, Paul reminded the deacons about their spiritual reward for having *served well.* First, they **acquire a good standing.** When a deacon serves the Lord and the church in an exemplary manner, other believers recognize his dedication and sacrifice. As a result, he is esteemed as a person with an honorable reputation. Second, a faithful deacon receives **great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.** Deep devotion to the Lord enhances the assurance that Jesus is worthy of our best service. It stirs a greater level of confidence in the power of Jesus to overcome any obstacle. Not only a deacon, but any believer who lives honorably for the Lord discovers an ever-growing boldness in the faith.

*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?*
IN MY CONTEXT

• Believers must consider what role God desires them to play in their local church.
• Believers can affirm men who demonstrate the qualities of a faithful pastor.
• Believers should seek to live a life that honors God through service.

Spend time praying about the role you play in your church. Ask God to help you faithfully serve in that role. Are there other roles He may be asking you to consider? What keeps you from taking on that additional role?

Discuss ways your group can encourage your pastor and his family. What actions should be taken as a result of this discussion?

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.

Prayer Needs
Believers must be nourished on God’s Word so they will know the truth.

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-13

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.

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 Christian living and doctrine. While Paul hoped to rejoin Timothy soon (1 Tim. 3:14), he knew that much needed to be done in the meantime. He wanted the believers to know how to conduct themselves not only in church, but as the church (3:15).

Paul knew that both right behavior and right belief were vital as the church encountered opposition. In chapter 4, he warned Timothy about the false teachers who not only would arise in the later times but were already afflicting believers in Ephesus. 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 subverters of both law and grace.

Paul saw Timothy as his son in the ministry and, as such, wanted him to succeed as “a good servant of Christ Jesus” (4:6). Rather than indulging in speculation and myths, Timothy’s teaching should focus on godliness so that people would place their hope securely in Christ alone.

Timothy had a gift for preaching and teaching, but Paul did not leave him in Ephesus merely to teach the church. He wanted Timothy to be an example of how to live for Christ (4:12). Timothy was to give careful attention to his life and his teaching. Persevering in both would not only benefit his hearers, but himself.

*Read 1 Timothy 4:1-13, looking for the imperatives given by Paul. What do these imperatives indicate about the expectations for Timothy?*

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**EXPLORE THE TEXT**

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

1 Now the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will depart from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits
and the teachings of demons, 2 through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared. 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, 5 since it is sanctified by the word of God and by prayer.

VERSE 1
Paul understood that the world was a battlefield between truth and falsehood. He affirmed that in the latter times—a period that began with Jesus’ first coming and will conclude with His second coming—it would be necessary to practice discernment.

Paul knew this because the Spirit made it clear. Jesus taught that false prophets would rise up and deceive many (Matt. 24:11), and the Holy Spirit confirmed that some will depart from the faith. The verb depart signifies a defection from someone or something. It involves a willful abandonment of truth. Jesus used this same verb in the parable about the soils to describe people who “believe for a while and fall away in a time of testing” (Luke 8:13).

Without any spiritual discernment, people will welcome teaching that distorts the truth about Jesus.

Paul emphasized two reasons people depart from the faith. First, they pay attention to deceitful spirits. They listen to and give heed to lies spread by Satan, the master of deception. Second, they embrace the teachings of demons. Without any spiritual discernment, people will welcome teaching that distorts the truth about Jesus.

VERSE 2
Although toxic and demonic teaching came from the devil, it came through men. Paul characterized those who transmit such teaching as liars whose consciences are seared. Their deadly lies were cloaked by a hypocritical mask of sincerity. The Greek word translated seared referred to a burning or branding with a hot iron. The word suggests that, as livestock were branded with marks of ownership, so also the false teachers were branded by Satan, and he owned their consciences. The word seared also carries the idea of cauterizing, which deadens
the feeling or destroys the sensitivity of an area of the body. Consequently, the false teachers had consciences that were cauterized to the point they had no perception of truth and righteousness.

This passage does not contradict the security of a believer. Paul’s warning to Timothy involved an awareness that some who claim to be followers of Christ have a spurious faith wrapped in a camouflage of religious works. Accordingly, their faith rested in their own rules of righteousness instead of the righteousness of Christ.

VERSES 3-5
False teachers were promoting behavior that denied God’s purpose for marriage and foods. Some of these teachers in Ephesus were influenced by the idea that spiritual things were good but physical things were morally bad. So in a misguided effort to achieve a higher spiritual status, they labeled marriage and marital intimacy as sinful. God never commends an activity that contradicts or compromises His stated purpose as revealed in Scripture. God ordained marriage between a man and a woman from the beginning of creation, and His blessing upon it continues. Celibacy mandated by human rules cannot produce righteousness.

The false teachers promoted a legalism that minimized God’s grace and maximized man’s rules. Paul emphasized that not only were the false teachers wrong about their food rules, but those foods were created by God and should be received with gratitude. Rather than deny the goodness of God’s creation, a believer can delight in it and enjoy it as God intended. This truth, however, is not a license to abuse the things God has created for our pleasure. Food can be eaten for pleasure and nutrition, but gluttony is an abuse. God blesses sexual intimacy in marriage, but adultery and pornography are abuses of His gift.

The word sanctified in verse 5 denotes something set apart and devoted to God. The word of God may refer to the act of blessing food. Praying over a meal doesn’t make it more blessed. It does, however, reflect a believer’s attitude of gratitude for what God has already blessed. The word of God could be a reference to creation, when God pronounced His work as good. More likely it signified the gospel message that abolished food rules as a means of achieving righteousness.
How does sin desensitize a person to truth? What other factors might desensitize a person to truth?

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?

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

6 If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished by the words of the faith and the good teaching that you have followed. 7 But have nothing to do with pointless and silly myths. Rather, train yourself in godliness. 8 For the training of the body has limited benefit, but godliness is beneficial in every way, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9 This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance. 10 For this reason we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

VERSE 6

Teaching and preaching doesn’t have to be harsh to be effective. The Greek word translated point… out indicates gentle persuasion.
Paul wanted Timothy to mix tenderness into serious warnings. He especially wanted Timothy to be a good servant of the Lord by demonstrating discipline in his life and teaching. In order to accomplish that lofty goal, Timothy needed to practice two disciplines. First, he needed to be nourished by the words of the faith. Servants of Jesus are nourished not by words of faith but by words of the faith, meaning the gospel. No servant can be effective in his ministry if he fails to receive the nourishment of the gospel of Christ. Timothy also needed to feed on good teaching or doctrine. Timothy not only had been taught the Scriptures since he had been a child (2 Tim. 3:14-15), he had followed them.

VERSES 7-10
Paul made it clear that a compromise between truth and falsehood was not acceptable. He urged Timothy to have nothing to do with pointless and silly myths. Instead, Timothy was to train himself in godliness.

Training doesn’t happen by chance or coincidence. It is a deliberate discipline and commitment toward a focused goal. Training in godliness involves both attitude and action, belief and behavior. The Greek word translated train is related to the word “gymnasium.” Paul used that word to reinforce spiritual exercise as an essential aspect of Timothy’s role as a godly leader. In order to lead well for Christ, Timothy must learn well from Christ. Learning involves spiritual training. Spiritual training involves the exercise of rigorous devotion. The exercise of rigorous devotion leads to effective impact for Christ.

Paul believed that both physical and spiritual discipline are valuable. The training of the body provides benefits for health and strength, but those benefits do not last. By contrast, training in godliness … holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. Paul was not suggesting that physical exercise was insignificant. Since our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit we should stay in sufficient shape to serve Jesus effectively. Paul’s point to Timothy was one of prioritizing godliness as a discipline that matters both now and forever.

For godliness, believers labor and strive. We don’t labor to earn God’s favor but rather because we have received God’s grace. The word strive carries an athletic meaning that referred to the agony involved
in a contest. Paul was emphasizing that living a godly life was not a leisurely stroll down easy street. It involves an agonizing struggle against sin and Satan.

Paul referred to God as the **Savior of all people, especially of those who believe**. God’s offer of salvation is available to all people. Salvation is effective, however, only for those who place their faith in Jesus. Paul was emphasizing that no one can be saved without faith.

*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)*

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. 13 Until I come, give your attention to public reading, exhortation, and teaching.

**VERSES 11-12**

Paul gave Timothy a robust challenge to **command and teach these things**. *Command* was a strong word for directing others with authority. *Teach* was the customary word for transmitting information that could be applied.

Timothy may have been reluctant to *command and teach* the church in Ephesus because of his young age. First-century culture valued the aged. An older teacher generally was considered wiser and more knowledgeable than a young teacher. Paul wanted Timothy not to allow anyone to belittle his ministry simply because he was relatively young (though Timothy may have been at least thirty years old).

Paul’s admonition that no one should **despise Timothy’s youth** served as a two-fold encouragement. First, it affirmed Timothy personally. Second, it was a message to the believers that Paul had left Timothy in charge as overseer. Age is not a disqualifier from leading.

The best way for Timothy to deflect complaints was to **set an example for the believers**, beginning with his *speech*. Paul expected Timothy to speak with Christ-centered authority while avoiding words that could stir strife and alienation. In addition, Timothy’s
conduct should be exemplary. Love was the unmistakable mark of an exemplary spiritual leader, and Paul wanted Timothy to walk in it. Faith was essential for Timothy’s leadership in a culture of unbelief. His bold trust would serve as a model for other struggling seekers. Moreover, Timothy needed to pursue purity. For the sake of the gospel, his life needed to be beyond reproach morally.

In what ways could you be an example for believers, beginning in your home?

VERSE 13
Paul planned to visit Timothy soon. (See 1 Tim. 3:14.) Until he did, Timothy was to give attention to three areas of ministry. First was the public reading. This would have included Old Testament Scripture and letters of Paul that were circulating the churches. Public reading of Scripture was the customary practice in first-century congregations.

Second was exhortation of God’s Word. This was a form of preaching that involved urging listeners to apply the truth of Scripture. Third, teaching believers to understand essential doctrines and fundamental elements of the faith.

Like Timothy, all believers must remain focused on God’s Word.

Until Paul could return to Ephesus, he expected Timothy to focus his attention on God’s Word. Like Timothy, all believers must remain focused on God’s Word.

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).
IN MY CONTEXT

• Believers must be aware that false teachers will try to lead them astray.
• Believers must be disciplined in their lives, seeking to honor God through living out the gospel.
• Believers must remain focused on God’s Word to be an example of godly living.

How can your vigilance be strengthened as you learn about false teaching and heresy?

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?

Reflect on 1 Timothy 4:13. List one action you can take for each of the three areas Timothy was told to focus on.

Prayer Needs
Believers should care for others, including widows and ministers.

**1 TIMOTHY 5:1-8,17-21**

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 sometimes 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.

What role should the church play in caring for the needs of people in the community?
1 TIMOTHY 5:1–6:2
Paul’s desire to see the church in Ephesus thrive is obvious by the details he gave Timothy. As a young pastor, Timothy faced a steep learning curve. Paul offered him guidance about several significant matters. The first involved advice about relating to a wide age range of church members (1 Tim. 5:1-2). Paul wanted Timothy to give gentle correction of an elderly believer, as if pleading with a father. On the other end of the age spectrum, Paul advised Timothy to lead younger men as brothers. Similarly with women, Paul instructed Timothy to approach older women tenderly as mothers and treat younger women respectfully as sisters.

Paul also gave Timothy instructions about caring for widows (5:3-16). He pointed out that believers had a responsibility to care for a widowed family member. Widows without family support needed help from the church. Some widows, however, did not qualify for church support.

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. Paul outlined several ways Timothy and the church should relate to these spiritual leaders, including how to deal with pastors who had been accused of wrongdoing.

In verses 22-23, Paul interjected some personal instruction for Timothy. Because of Timothy’s health problems, Paul advised him to mix some wine with the water he typically drank.

Carrying over into 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.

As you read 1 Timothy 5:1-8, 17-21, look for reasons behind Paul’s instructions. How does knowing why we do something help us complete the task?
EXPLORE THE TEXT

RESPECT ALL (1 TIM. 5:1-2)

1 Don’t rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters with all purity.

VERSES 1-2

As a young pastor, Timothy faced the challenge of leading men and women of various ages. Paul knew that part of Timothy’s leadership involved confronting unacceptable attitudes and actions among believers. Regarding Timothy’s approach toward elderly men, Paul gave two guidelines. First, Timothy should not rebuke an older man. The word rebuke in this context referred to a severe tongue lashing. Paul was not suggesting that an older man’s rude disposition or disruptive deeds should be ignored. Instead, he was instructing Timothy not to engage in verbal rage toward a senior believer. Contempt toward a member of God’s family must be avoided.

Second, a mature man was to be exhorted as a father who deserved respect. Such an approach would uphold Timothy’s role of pastoral leadership and reduce relational friction. The manner in which Timothy dealt with an older man was as significant as the message he spoke.

Similarly, Paul reminded Timothy to engage younger men as if they were his beloved brothers. Timothy needed to treat them with respect and affection. Whenever they needed correction he was expected to give it without pompous censure. As a leader Timothy did not have to choose between firmness and tenderness. He could demonstrate both effectively for the health of the church.

Likewise, Paul offered two guidelines for Timothy to follow as he ministered to women at Ephesus. First, Timothy was to relate to older women as mothers. Second, Paul wanted Timothy to treat younger women as sisters. Specifically, Timothy was to maintain a standard of purity and avoid sexual immorality. By viewing the opposite sex as members of God’s family, Timothy would provide healthy and holy leadership. When confrontation was necessary, Timothy was to do so in a manner that honored both older and younger women in the church.

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How does the way we approach a person impact his or her willingness to listen? How can a person balance sternness and love?

**KEY DOCTRINE: 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).

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

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. 8 But if anyone does not provide for his own family, especially for his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

**VERSES 3-7**

Caring for widows is prominently emphasized in the Old Testament (Ex. 22:22; Deut. 24:17,19; Ps. 68:5; Isa. 1:17). Paul impressed upon Timothy not only the responsibility of caring for widows, but the effective management of a ministry on their behalf. Apparently, the burden of care-giving had strained the congregation in Ephesus and necessitated clarification about the qualifications for support. 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. Some widows had financial resources left to them by their deceased husbands. Some received support from their extended family. Widows who were destitute and without family support for daily provisions were classified as true widows in need of help from the church.
How does the care of widows within a church serve as a testimony for Christ in the larger community?

A widow’s children or grandchildren were expected to care for her needs. By taking responsibility for her well-being they would practice godliness and provide tangible proof of their devotion to Christ. The demonstration of godliness and compassion within the family context authenticated three attributes: a genuine faith, gratitude toward a mother or grandmother, and a pleasing service to the Lord.

In contrast to the widows who were genuinely in need of support, Paul implied that some widows did not qualify for church support. This was especially true for a widow who was self-indulgent. She was described as being dead even while she lives.

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. Paul expected Timothy to teach the congregation and warn the widows. If the congregation would honor and support the true widows, and the widows would avoid sinful behavior, and family members would act responsibly toward a widowed mother or grandmother, then neither the widows nor the church could be blamed for negligence or for impropriety. Furthermore, the gospel would not be discredited.

VERSE 8
Believers who could provide for their families were obligated to do so. Even an unbeliever in Paul’s world understood the need to provide for his own household. A believer’s failure to care for his family indicated two things. First, that the person had denied the faith. This didn’t mean that a believer lost his salvation. It meant that a believer’s behavior repudiated his professed belief. Second, that he is worse than an unbeliever. If unbelievers practiced responsible care-giving in their households, but believers failed to do so, then it would appear that the morality of those who rejected the gospel was superior to those who professed Christ. Paul’s admonition was a stern rebuke. It was also a firm reminder of the importance of demonstrating Christian love in the family.
Where is the line between family expectations and church responsibility? How can they partner in a way that is fair to both?

**BIBLE SKILL:** Compare similar passages.

Read 1 Timothy 5:9-16 and jot down some of the requirements Paul made for widows who received church benevolence. Read the article on widows in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* or in a similar resource. Compare this article and Paul’s instructions regarding ministry to widows with the following Scriptures: Deuteronomy 10:18; 24:20-21; 26:12-13. Based on what you read, what could your church do to fulfill scriptural expectations for ministry to widows in your church?

**CARE FOR PASTORS** (1 TIM. 5:17-21)

17 The elders who are good leaders are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says: Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain, and the worker is worthy of his wages. 19 Don’t accept an accusation against an elder unless it is supported by two or three witnesses. 20 Publicly rebuke those who sin, so that the rest will be afraid. 21 I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels to observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing out of favoritism.

**VERSES 17-18**

Leaders are to be financially supported and treated with respect. By the term “elders,” Paul was referring to pastors who had the responsibility of overseeing church ministries and preaching the gospel. Pastors in Ephesus, like pastors today, had an obligation to
fulfill their calling from God. Consequently, pastors who are good leaders should be considered worthy of financial support.

Double honor does not mean double pay. Paul was, however, urging the church to be generous. Paul called attention to pastors who work hard at preaching and teaching because the task of effectively communicating the gospel was a labor-intensive ministry. Preaching involved more of a public proclamation of the gospel. It was peppered with exhortation and evangelization. Teaching involved ethical instruction. It was accentuated with reason and explanation. Both preaching and teaching are to exalt Christ, edify believers, and evangelize the unsaved. The twin tasks done effectively were worthy of financial support and respect.

Paul quoted from the Old Testament to support his instruction. The command, Do not muzzle an ox, was found in the Mosaic Law and pertained to the care of oxen while they threshed grain (Deut. 25:4). Oxen were yoked to wooden poles attached to a circular millstone. As they plodded, the millstone would grind the grain. To muzzle the oxen prevented them from enjoying some of the grain. They were to be allowed the opportunity to eat because of their work and their worth to the owner. Paul’s point was that pastors should be sufficiently compensated for their work in the gospel and their worth to the Savior’s mission.

Paul also cited Jesus’ words that the worker is worthy of his wages (Matt. 10:10). If a laboring ox was rewarded for its work, a pastor should be supported for his labor.

Do you believe it is more difficult or easier to lead a church today than it was thirty years ago? Give examples to illustrate your response.

VERSE 19

All pastors are flawed individuals. None are above criticism, and none are beyond being falsely accused. Some accusations may be legitimate and require examination. Other accusations can be spurious and arise from impure motives that require dismissal.

Paul was well aware that conflicts were common in churches. He personally understood the emotional agony and the damage resulting from false accusations. Paul was not advocating preferential © LifeWay 2019
treatment for pastors. He was recommending fair and unbiased examination. Consequently, he urged the rejection of unsubstantiated charges against a pastor. The verb don’t accept is an imperative instructing Timothy to cease and desist frivolous complaints. There was a real danger that the integrity of a leader’s life could be discredited and the ministry at Ephesus damaged by slander. The term accusation is a translation of a Greek word conveying a public denunciation. Such accusations against a pastor were not to be received without clear and warranted corroboration.

The condition for acceptance of charges had to be based on two or three witnesses. Paul supported his instruction by grounding it in the Old Testament stipulation that multiple witnesses were necessary to consider the accusation (Deut. 17:6; 19:15). Once the charges were received, a thorough investigation of the allegation and a gathering of evidence could be presented.

VERSE 20
If church members continued to engage in sin, Paul expected Timothy to publicly rebuke them. The purpose of the rebuke was to call attention to the sin and to discipline the guilty person so that other believers might also be afraid. A reverential fear of accountability before God can be an acceptable motive for avoiding sinful activity.

VERSE 21
Timothy was likely timid about his assignment. Nevertheless, he was charged to do it. The phrase I solemnly charge carried the idea of intense testifying. Paul earnestly testified that Timothy absolutely must carry out the task. Moreover, the witnesses to Paul’s plea and Timothy’s responsibility were God and Christ Jesus and the heavenly host of angels. Timothy was charged with the responsibility of confronting the guilty persons and making sure that any investigations of wrongdoing were conducted without prejudice or favoritism. No one was to receive special treatment. The rebuke was to be balanced with grace.

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?

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IN MY CONTEXT

- Believers are to treat each other as respected family members.
- Believers are to help take care of the needs of faithful believers who face life alone.
- Believers are responsible to God for the support they provide their pastoral leadership.

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?

Reflect on the responsibilities you have for others as a member of a family and of a church. What actions do you need to take to better care for the people in your family and in the church who are unable to care for themselves?

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?

Prayer Needs
Lasting Investments

Believers should be motivated by the value of living a godly life as opposed to material gain.

1 Timothy 6:6-19

Most of us got our first jobs not because we wanted that particular 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.

What was your first job? What did you like most about it? Would you want to do that kind of work again? Explain.
UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

1 TIMOTHY 6:3-21
Paul closed out his letter to Timothy with words of wisdom about money, helping Timothy address the traps that come when we base our lives and self worth on possessions. He restated the necessity of confronting and correcting the false teachings that had infiltrated the church. He pointed out how the false teachers’ thinking was corrupt and conceited. They promoted a false doctrine of prosperity as a means of godliness. They craved material gain and lusted after wealth. Their teaching carried perilous implications for the church.

In response to their greed, Paul gave a warning about the snare of riches and how it can plunge people into ruin. He explained that the love of money was a root of evil and could lure believers away from faith.

After addressing the danger of materialism, Paul urged Timothy to stay clear of false doctrines and to flee from the enticements of harmful desire. He told him to follow hard after holy virtues and to fight for the faith. Paul expected Timothy to proclaim and protect the gospel and to boldly live the life to which he was called. He reminded Timothy about the confession of faith he had made in the presence of many witnesses, encouraging him to faithfully persevere in the tough culture of Ephesus.

Paul cited two reasons for Timothy to continue leading the church: the glorious return of Christ and the immeasurable attributes of God. Since Ephesus was a key center for the worship of the Roman Emperor, Paul deliberately contrasted the worship of a human leader with the worship of the peerless Ruler of the universe who was Lord over all people and all worldly leaders.

Paul added a final instruction to wealthy believers. He urged them to avoid arrogance and elitism. He challenged them to use their wealth generously for good goals and to leverage their stewardship toward eternal dividends.

As you read 1 Timothy 6:6-19, notice the warnings given by Paul. How does each warning relate to the other warnings given?
EXPLORE THE TEXT

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

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. 8 If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. 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 grieves.

VERSES 6-8

Paul warned 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 in verse 6 contrasts his next statement with what he had written previously regarding those “who imagine that godliness is a way to material gain” (v. 5). Lasting contentment has nothing to do with material wealth or worldly success.

Paul gave two reasons for pursuing godliness. First, there is the obvious reality that we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. None of the world’s luxuries can be carried into eternity. No one stands before God adorned in earthly riches. It is futile for a follower of Christ to chase worthless things. Second, godliness and contentment are nurtured through simplicity. Some people spend their lives trying to amass wealth and possessions. They equate success with having a certain standard of living. Paul reminded Timothy that having food and clothing is sufficient. Believers can be content with these.

VERSES 9-10

A desire to be rich is both a temptation and a trap. The Greek word that Paul used for trap referred to a snare that suddenly and unexpectedly catches an animal. The trap of greed springs quickly and holds tightly.

The slippery slope of greed starts as a temptation, becomes a trap, then turns ultimately into a tragedy. It will plunge people into ruin and destruction. Paul reminded Timothy that following unchecked desires leads people into a sea of devastation.

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Money itself is morally neutral. There is nothing wrong with money. Money can be used for good to secure shelter for those who are homeless, food for those who are starving, and medicine for those who are sick. Money can be used to build schools, seminaries, churches, and hospitals. It can support missionaries and church leaders as they spread the gospel and edify believers.

However, money can also be used wrongly to violate justice, oppress the poor, abuse the innocent, corrupt the meek, and slander the virtuous. The matter of money is indeed a matter of the heart. The love of money and a craving for riches is symptomatic of a heart that puts its trust in a currency that God does not accept. A love of money erects an idol in the heart that exalts itself above God’s sufficiency.

Paul said some people who craved money had wandered away from the faith. He did not mean they had lost their salvation. Rather, they were like sheep who wandered away from the shepherd, seeking greener pastures. These believers followed their desires into unfruitful lives. They experienced self-inflicted injuries, having pierced themselves with many griefs. Instead of finding contentment, they ended up restless and wounded. The word pierced invokes a gruesome image of an animal on a skewer being cooked over a fire.

**What does it mean to base your contentment on Christ?**

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

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

12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of eternal life to which you were called and about which you have made a good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13 In the presence of God, who gives life to all, and of Christ Jesus, who gave a good confession before Pontius Pilate, I charge you 14 to keep this command without fault or failure until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. 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.
VERSE 11

Paul addressed Timothy as a man of God. That title was a common Old Testament description of someone appointed by God to proclaim His truth. Paul used it to remind Timothy of the sacred responsibilities God had given him.

First, Timothy was commanded to flee from these things. These things included the lust for money, the lure of heretical doctrines, and the liability of quarreling about trivial matters in the church. Second, Timothy was commanded to run toward holy virtues. The verb pursue is an imperative designating strong and immediate action. Not only must Timothy flee from harmful things, he must follow hard after holy things. Righteousness and godliness are distinguished in that the former indicates right standing with God that produces right conduct while the latter indicates right living for God that reflects His character. Faith and love are intersecting virtues that reflect trust in Christ and selfless love for Him and for others. Endurance and gentleness were crucial leadership qualities essential for Timothy’s effectiveness in ministry. Endurance referred to the vital perseverance of someone who remained loyal to Christ despite tribulation. Gentleness referred to a disposition of courteousness and tenderness as Timothy fulfilled his responsibility as pastor.

How would the pursuit of the items identified by Paul counter greed?

VERSE 12

Paul stressed the intense spiritual battle facing every follower of Christ. (See Eph. 6:11.) The tense of the verb fight indicated an ongoing conflict comparable to military combat or athletic agony. Spiritual warfare requires believers to put on the full armor of God. The good fight described the praiseworthy nature of the contest as Timothy contended for the faith. His assignment involved wrestling against the false teachers for purity of doctrine.

In addition, Timothy was called to take hold of eternal life. Timothy, like all believers, had eternal life as a present possession and a future anticipation. The phrase take hold meant to seize and grasp something.
Paul expected Timothy to grasp firmly the truth of eternal life and let it seize his perspective as he boldly lived for Christ.

Timothy could achieve this objective for two reasons. First, he had been called by God. He was called to salvation and to ministry. Second, Timothy made a good confession in the presence of many witnesses. He publicly declared his faith in Christ upon salvation and baptism. Furthermore, he testified about Christ in the presence of witnesses when he surrendered to serve Christ in ministry upon his ordination.

VERSES 13-14
Paul urged Timothy to fulfill his calling because he was accountable to God who gives life to all. God the Father who breathed life into everything gave Timothy his life and ministry. Furthermore, Timothy was accountable to Christ Jesus, who gave a good confession before Pontius Pilate. When Pilate asked Jesus if He was the King of the Jews, He courageously replied that He was (Matt. 27:11). Timothy was to model his faithfulness after Jesus.

Paul also charged Timothy to keep this command without fault or failure. The command could have referred to Timothy’s specific responsibility as a “man of God” as well as his responsibility to proclaim and defend the essential truths of the gospel.

Paul instructed Timothy to live faithfully until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Anticipation of Christ’s return would inspire Timothy to give his best and to live each day to the fullest, as if it could be his last.

VERSES 15-16
The return of Christ will occur according to God’s timetable. Timothy was expected to labor in the harvest and avoid speculation about the timing of the second coming. In view of Christ’s return, Paul erupted in majestic praise to God. He expressed several attributes of God’s greatness that would motivate Timothy’s service.

God is the only Sovereign because He alone is God. The word sovereign indicates power and authority. Timothy’s effectiveness in ministry rests in the assurance that the One who was all powerful would impart the power needed to complete the task.

God is also King of kings and Lord of lords. This title was used of God in the Old Testament (Deut. 10:17; Ps. 136:2-3; Dan. 2:47) as well as God the Son in the New Testament (Rev. 17:14; 19:16). Kings rule
over people and impose their will upon them. God is the King who exerts His rule over all human kings. Moreover, He is the Lord who wields authority over all rivals and is absolutely superior to any challenges.

God alone is immortal. While God gives eternal life to believers, their lives began with His creation. Only God is without beginning or ending. He dwells in unapproachable light. God is so holy that the light of His glory renders Him unapproachable by sinful beings. Therefore no one has seen, or can see Him. He is Spirit whom no one has seen at any time, but who has revealed Himself in the Son.

This doxology reflects the adoration of God with which Paul began this letter (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 our worship because He rules and reigns forever.

How does focusing on Jesus and His character help a believer fulfill God’s purposes?

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).

STEWARDS OF GOOD WORKS (1 TIM. 6:17-19)

17 Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy. 18 Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share, 19 storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of what is truly life.

VERSES 17-19
Previously Paul addressed the problem of those who craved wealth. Here he addressed those who were already wealthy. He instructed
Timothy to warn them about arrogance. The word arrogant referred quite literally to a high minded attitude of conceit. The danger of wealth lies in its power to subtly persuade a person to look down on others and look away from God. Rather than putting confidence in the accumulation of earthly treasures, the wealthy should trust God, who rightly provides everything necessary for enjoyment.

Moreover, affluent believers should strive for two goals: First, to be rich in good works. Material wealth could be used to bless others and spread the gospel. Second, believers should strive to be generous and willing to share.

Paul knew that wise stewardship of all possessions was an eternal investment. Believers who invest in eternity store up for themselves a good foundation. Believers fail or succeed in their stewardship to the measure of their conviction that everything belongs to God. Consequently, a faithful steward in Ephesus understood what it meant to take hold of what is truly life. Followers of Christ who lived in the shadow of first-century wealth could testify that real life—the abundant life (John 10:10)—did not reside in the fleeting pleasures of materialism but in a true relationship with the Savior now and forever.

In what ways can a person leverage his or her financial resources to spread the gospel and strengthen the church?

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?

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**IN MY CONTEXT**

- Believers find purpose and contentment by pursuing godliness.
- Believers are to live in light of the promise of eternal life.
- Believers are to use what they have to bless others.

*Reflect on 1 Timothy 6:10. Ask God to show you any areas in your life where your love is misguided. Memorize the verse.*

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*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?*

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*What changes can you make to honor Christ so that your earthly resources enhance kingdom opportunities locally and globally?*

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**Prayer Needs**
CONFIDENCE

Believers can have confidence in Christ in all circumstances.

2 TIMOTHY 1:3-14

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.

*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 1:3-14
Second Timothy represents a change of tone from Paul’s first letter to Timothy. In his previous epistle, Paul urged him 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 his 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.

In a major difference from his first epistle, Paul wrote this letter from a Roman prison. He believed his life was approaching its end. Timothy must have understood the serious finality of the situation and wept over what might happen. Paul responded with a pledge of constant prayer.

Inspiring him to courageous ministry, Paul also reminded Timothy of his spiritual heritage. Paul was confident that Timothy shared the faith of his mother and grandmother.

Just as Paul compared himself with Timothy regarding their battle for the gospel and their heritage of faith, he also affirmed their mutual suffering. Paul encouraged Timothy not to be ashamed of Christ’s testimony. He reminded Timothy that God had not only 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 they could trust the Holy Spirit who worked in them.

As you read 2 Timothy 1:3-14, look for qualities of the person the Lord entrusts with His message.
HERITAGE (2 TIM. 1:3-5)

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. 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.

VERSES 3-4

Although often imprisoned, Paul never viewed himself as a victim. He offered thanksgiving to God. Paul’s gratitude inspired him to remember Timothy in his prayers night and day. The affection between Paul and Timothy was like a bond between a father and a son.

Paul’s yearning to see Timothy was based on two factors. First, he remembered Timothy’s tears. Paul didn’t explain the occasion for Timothy’s emotion. It could have been the tearful farewell in Acts 20:37 when Paul parted from Timothy and the Ephesian elders. Timothy’s tears underscored the friendship and esteem he and Paul held for each other. Second, Paul longed to see Timothy because he needed the joy that a reunion would bring. Paul knew that the source of true joy is Christ. He also knew that the joy of the Lord sometimes flows through a friend in Christ.

VERSE 5

Timothy’s faith was sincere. The word sincere conveys authenticity. Paul saw in Timothy’s faith the same vitality that thrived in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Their faith set an example of true devotion to Christ which they modeled for Timothy. Timothy’s heritage served as fertile soil for the gospel to take root in his life. When Paul declared that he was convinced of the sincere faith abiding in Timothy, he was bearing witness to a continuing passion for Jesus that was three generations deep.

How is a person’s spiritual growth impacted by the lives of others?
**BIBLE SKILL: Compare Bible characters.**

Compare the influence of Lois and Eunice with the influence of Cornelius, Lydia, and the Philippian jailer on their households. (See Acts 10:2; 16:15; 16:31-34.) Contrast these examples with the effects of ungodly parents found in the following passages: 1 Kings 13:33; 15:26; 15:34; 16:25; 16:30; 22:52. What actions could you take to be a godly influence in your family? What encouragement can you find in Paul’s advice to Timothy that would help you live out a godly example for others?

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**GIFTED (2 TIM. 1:6-7)**

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.

**VERSES 6-7**

Timothy needed to keep ablaze the gift of God that was in him. Paul urged him to fan the existing fire into a full flame. The specific gift Timothy received from God is not identified but likely involved his ministry that was officially recognized during the laying on of Paul’s hands. The laying on of hands was a symbolic act representing God’s calling and imparting of His gift. Paul wanted Timothy’s ministry at Ephesus to be stirred into a blazing furnace of godly leadership so that he could withstand the antagonists, equip the believers, and evangelize the lost. Giftedness requires responsible utilization for maximum effectiveness.

All believers receive the Holy Spirit at conversion and are gifted for service. Paul emphasized the need for Timothy to exercise his gifts courageously because God did not give believers a spirit of fear. The term spirit in this context refers to a disposition or temperament supplied to believers from the Holy Spirit. Instead of fear, timidity, and dread, the Holy Spirit provides power, love, and sound judgment for kingdom effectiveness.
The word **power** denotes godly strength of character that Timothy needed to proclaim the gospel and confront the heretical doctrines of false teachers. God’s power was required for Timothy to succeed as a leader. Failure awaited if he trusted solely in his own strength and abilities to do the work.

Timothy also needed **love** and **sound judgment**. **Sound judgment** involved both wisdom and discipline. Timothy faced situations in Ephesus that required keen analysis and critical thinking beyond natural ability. He needed to rely on the supernatural discernment that God provided. Consequently, the **power**, **love**, and **sound judgment** imparted to Timothy enabled him to serve the Lord with all his strength, his heart, and his mind.

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

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**MAJOR THEMES IN 2 TIMOTHY**

- **Giftedness.** Paul reminded Timothy of his God-given gifts.
- **Sound teaching.** Paul charged Timothy to continue in the pattern of sound teaching he had received.
- **Ministry priorities.** Paul urged Timothy to not engage in futile disputes but to keep his eye on the highest priorities of ministry.
- **Difficult times ahead.** Paul warned of perilous times in the future.
- **The inspired Scriptures.** Paul reminded Timothy of the importance of God-inspired Scripture as the sure compass for navigating the future.

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**UNASHAMED** (2 TIM. 1:8-12)

8 So don’t be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God. 9 He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. 10 This has
now been made evident through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 11 For this gospel I was appointed a herald, apostle, and teacher, 12 and that is why I suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day.

VERSE 8
Paul realized that some people would wrongly interpret his imprisonment. Some would view the legal charges against him as the judgment of God upon the message he preached. Moreover, Paul knew that Timothy was susceptible to the mounting persecution. He exhorted Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of Paul as a prisoner of Christ. Paul didn’t consider himself to be a prisoner of Rome. It was Christ, not Nero, that captured Paul’s life. Suffering was the price of uncompromising loyalty to Jesus and was bearable by relying on the power of God. God’s power was sufficient to either remove Timothy’s affliction or to sustain him through the affliction.

VERSES 9-10
Timothy could rely on God’s power because he had experienced it through salvation. The phrase he has saved us was a stark reminder of all that God had done through Christ. God took the initiative not only to save sinners but to call them with a holy calling. God’s saving plan involved a call to live a godly life.

Paul continued to remind Timothy that neither salvation nor calling were based on worthiness or works. Instead, everything was based on God’s purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ.

The death of Jesus on the cross was the means by which atonement was made for sin. God graciously and purposely gave His Son as the sin substitute. Salvation was not an afterthought but was conceived by God in eternity before time began. It was crucial for Timothy to recall the saving power and purpose of God in Christ before the world was formed. In view of a perilous situation and Paul’s impending execution, Timothy could find great comfort knowing that God saw the future, and He was able to embolden Timothy to persevere through it.
What God purposed before time began He proved in the fullness of time through Jesus, who has *abolished death*. The word *abolished* is a translation of a Greek verb indicating “nullification” or “making something useless.” Jesus nullified death’s power for those who place their trust in Him. Physical death is no less real, but it is no longer final.

In addition, Paul emphasized that our Savior brought *life and immortality to light through the gospel*. Jesus turned what was once dark speculation about eternity into a bright reality that abundant life continues after the grave.

**VERSES 11-12**

*For this gospel* Paul was *appointed a herald*. A *herald* was someone who proclaimed a message under the authority of a superior. Paul was a messenger proclaiming salvation under the lordship of Christ. He realized also that he was an *apostle* because he had been commissioned with Christ’s authority to spread the gospel. Furthermore, Paul embraced his role as a *teacher*. He was appointed to communicate God’s truth and to expound clearly its meaning.

Paul’s faithfulness to his role led to suffering and imprisonment. He was not complaining; he was explaining that the reason for his suffering was linked to resistance to the gospel message. Nevertheless, Paul was *not ashamed*. The pleasure of obedience to the Lord canceled out any shame associated with his arrests and afflictions. He knew the Savior in whom he had placed his faith. The word *know* indicated an intimate relationship based on experience. It is significant that Paul emphasized *whom* he believed rather than “what” he believed. The “what” of the gospel message is crucial because the “whom” is indispensable.

Paul’s faith in Jesus was not based on speculation. He was fully persuaded that Jesus would not fail him or disappoint him as he faced an impending death. The word *guard* was a military term describing the vigilance of a soldier protecting something or someone. Paul was confident that Jesus could and would protect what had been *entrusted* to him. The gospel message had been entrusted to Paul. In turn, Paul deposited his life into the will of God.

The phrase *until that day* indicated that God would guard the deposit until the return of Christ. Paul’s encouragement to Timothy was that God always keeps His promise and He never forsakes anyone who makes a deposit of his or her life and ministry into His keeping. On *that day*
Paul’s faithfulness and Timothy’s devotion will be evaluated and their suffering for the cause of Christ will be vindicated.

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?

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church (1 Cor. 12:4-6).

LOYAL (2 TIM. 1:13-14)

13 Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 14 Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

VERSES 13-14

Paul expected Timothy to be loyal to the gospel and to hold on to the pattern of sound teaching. Pattern denoted an outline. Timothy had listened to Paul teach in a variety of settings and had soaked up sound teaching. He was expected to use it as an outline for communicating God’s truth.

Paul also charged Timothy to guard what had been entrusted to him by the Lord. This verse is similar to Paul’s closing charge to Timothy in his previous letter (1 Tim. 6:20). Timothy did not need to carry out this work in his own strength but could depend on the Holy Spirit. Like Timothy, we are charged with delivering the gospel not only to our generation, but to the next.

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?
IN MY CONTEXT

• Believers can find strength from those who invest in them spiritually.
• Believers can act boldly with the power of the Holy Spirit working through them.
• Believers can live with confidence knowing that Christ demonstrated His power through the resurrection.
• Believers are charged with delivering the gospel to the next generation.

List the names of people who have invested in your spiritual development. What truths have you learned from them? How are you passing those lessons on to others?

Discuss as a group ways of encouraging each other to exercise their giftedness by the Holy Spirit. What actions need to be taken?

Focus on 2 Timothy 1:12. What actions do you need to take so that you can personally declare this verse as well?

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

**2 TIMOTHY 2:1-13**

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.

*What factors contribute to a hardship sharpening or souring a person’s view of life?*
UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

2 TIMOTHY 2:1-13
There were many things that Paul wanted Timothy to know and do. Nothing was more essential to Timothy’s effectiveness, however, than being strengthened in the grace of Christ. The gift of grace was not a commodity to be kept hidden but a treasure to be shared and invested in the lives of dependable men who would entrust it to other reliable believers. Paul offered Timothy three examples to inspire his work for the Lord. The first was a soldier who was obediently loyal. The second was a disciplined athlete who was trained to compete according to the rules. The third was a farmer who, as a patient laborer, worked and waited in expectation of a harvest.

Timothy needed to intentionally fix his focus on Jesus and not shy away from the inevitability of suffering. Paul told him to embrace a trustworthy saying and remember four truths:

• Death with Christ results in life with Him.
• Endurance for Christ ensures reigning in Christ’s kingdom.
• Perpetually denying Christ leads to separation from Christ.
• Human unfaithfulness does not alter the faithfulness of Christ. He remains faithful and true in consistency with His character.

As you read 2 Timothy 2:1-13, notice the three vocations identified by Paul. How does each vocation highlight Paul’s point?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

FUTURE FOCUSED (2 TIM. 2:1-2)
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.
Timothy faced perils in Ephesus that required a strength beyond his natural ability. Paul’s exhortation was not a summons for Timothy to rely upon his own strength but to be continually strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Paul expected Timothy to depend on all that Jesus could do through him more so than what he could do for himself.

Timothy had heard Paul declare the gospel to the Jews and Greeks in Ephesus, to believers at Troas, to women gathered outside Philippi, to Greeks at Thessalonica, and to philosophers in Athens. Consequently, he urged Timothy to pass along to others the truth he had heard and received.

The word commit carries the idea of investing. Timothy needed to invest the truths of the gospel into the lives of others. Given Paul’s impending death and the strong likelihood that Timothy could be arrested, Paul wanted him to be focused on the future and to train others to carry on the mission. Two qualifications were essential. First Timothy needed to invest in faithful men. Reliability was a crucial factor. Men who were trustworthy and dependable could be counted on to spread the gospel. A second qualification Timothy needed to look for was men who would be able to teach others.

The message of the gospel was never meant to be hoarded. It was intended to be transmitted and propagated to all generations. Reliable men, full of integrity would stand firm against the assault of any antagonists. Competent men who were gifted to teach could inspire others to guard the gospel against heresies and equip them to defend the truth.

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

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

3 Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the concerns of civilian life; he seeks to please the commanding officer. 5 Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. 6 The hardworking farmer ought to be the
VERSES 3-4
Paul viewed hardships as opportunities for the sufficiency of Christ to be seen in his life, and he encouraged Timothy to do the same. The phrase *share in suffering* 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. In order to remove any vagueness about the mission, Paul provided Timothy with three illustrations.

The military image of a *soldier* offered a clear picture of duty united with devotion. A good soldier was focused on the task assigned to him. He did more than the minimum because he pursued excellence. He desired to please his recruiter, who in this case was the Lord.

A good soldier was focused on the orders of his commanding officer and avoided getting entangled in the concerns of everyday life. Paul was not indicating that a soldier should avoid his family and friends. He was clarifying that the primary mission should not be compromised by irrelevant activities. The operative word is *entangled*, and it referred to someone snared in a trap from which it was hard to escape. A good soldier concentrated his attention on the mission and kept himself free from enticements that would hinder his service. Seemingly harmless diversions held hidden perils that could sideline a soldier and thwart the victory of a campaign. Obedience and loyalty were essential attributes of a soldier. When a Roman citizen became a soldier, he took an oath of loyalty to the emperor. He accepted the necessity of obedience and the execution of orders beyond his understanding. At all times, but especially during combat, a good soldier shared in the suffering of fellow soldiers. In doing so, he not only proved his loyalty, he pleased his commanding officer.

VERSE 5
Another illustration Paul used to rivet Timothy’s focus on the mission was that of an *athlete*. The word *competes* emphasized rigorous training and steadfast commitment. Greek and Roman culture celebrated competition in athletic events as attested by the popularity of the Olympic and Isthmian games.
A competitive athlete was known by his discipline. He refused to indulge in pleasures that would weaken his resolve or interfere with his training. Furthermore, an athlete was known by his devotion to the rules of a game.

Athletic rules defined what was allowable by the judges during a contest. Furthermore, rules governed the behavior of players in order to prevent bribery, lying, cheating, and other practices deemed as inappropriate. Ancient Greek athletes were required to take oaths regarding their practice and performance.

Paul applied the metaphor of an athlete competing for victory to a believer striving to live victoriously for Christ. Rules of holiness were important to the effectiveness of anyone desiring to serve the Lord honorably. Just as a noble athlete would not desire to bypass or violate the rules of a contest, so also a faithful follower of Christ would not ignore or minimize the rules for godly service. Individuals who substitute their own rules and preferences for the discipline and directive of Christ cannot expect the victor’s crown. For believers, crowns are not icons earned by merit but rewards based on grace received from the Judge over life and death. For, Paul, a crown was a recognition of faithfulness and devotion to Christ.

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?

VERSE 6
Paul’s final illustration involved a hardworking farmer. The adjective hardworking denoted strenuous labor to the point of weariness. First-century farming was exhausting toil that required perseverance through all types of weather. The farmer had to plow the soil and plant the seed in the opportune season and wait patiently for the crop to mature. Working and waiting were twin virtues that faithful farmers needed in order to celebrate the harvest.

Paul emphasized to Timothy that the mission of Christ required hard work every day. Laziness was not an option if a good harvest
was expected. Patience stirred hope in the heart of a Christian leader as it did in the heart of a diligent farmer.

Just as the fruit of the harvest was a reward for a farmer, the diligent servant of Christ could expect the blessings of a spiritual harvest from his labor for Christ.

**VERSE 7**
Paul wanted Timothy to reflect on the obedient loyalty of a good soldier, the training of a disciplined athlete, and the painstaking work of a faithful farmer. There could be no commendation for a soldier unless he pleased his commanding officer. There would be no crown for an athlete unless he followed the rules of competition. There could be no harvest for a farmer unless he invested long and fatiguing days of patient toil in his fields.

Paul was confident that as Timothy pondered the relevance of the three illustrations, God would provide the necessary illumination. God delights to grant believers *understanding in everything* when there is a desire to glorify His mission His way. Receptivity to God’s Word creates the spiritual fertility for grasping and applying His truth in the confusing details of daily life.

**BIBLE SKILL: Use a Bible concordance.**
Identify passages listed under “endure” in a Bible concordance. Review the passages, narrowing your search to New Testament passages. Write a summary of what you discover. How do these passages help you understand Paul’s words to Timothy?

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

8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David, according to my gospel, 9 for which I suffer to the point of being bound like a criminal. But the word of God is not bound. 10 This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also

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may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.  
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.

VERSES 8-10
The verb remember carries the meaning “remember and keep on remembering.” Paul was challenging Timothy to fix his full and continual attention on two foundational aspects of the gospel. First, Timothy needed to remember the victory of Christ who was risen from the dead. Second, Timothy needed to remember the role that Jesus fulfilled as a descendant of David. Jesus’ resurrection served as proof that He was fully God. That He descended from the lineage of David served as proof that He was fully man. Jesus faced temptation, endured human suffering, and is able to sympathize with our weaknesses. Timothy could find motivation to continue serving by remembering these things.

Paul was suffering in prison because of his unflinching devotion to Christ. His chains intensified his misery and limited his movement. Paul’s focus, however, was not on the injustice of his bondage. Instead, he took delight in the fact that the word of God is not bound. He assured Timothy that neither the imprisonment of the messenger nor his death would stop the spread of the message of the gospel.

Paul was willing to endure suffering so that others might hear the gospel and obtain salvation. He understood that taking the gospel throughout the Roman Empire meant encountering opposition. He counted the cost of obedience and remained faithful because the salvation of others was at stake. Paul was willing to endure hardship so that people of every tribe and nation could have the opportunity to be saved.

VERSES 11-13
Once again, Paul used the phrase, this saying is trustworthy to affirm the absolute reliability of its truth. All four statements of truth begin with a conditional conjunction if and end with a resulting declaration. The tense of the word died 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 will also live not only touches on the aspect of eternity but also the state of life we enjoy in Him now.

The second conditional statement relates to the believer’s willingness to endure. 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 to remain faithful to the gospel task even when under the pressure of opposition. Believers who persevere will also reign with him. Just as Jesus endured the cross and rose again to His seat in glory, even so in Him believers can share His triumph (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 Father (Matt. 10:33). The term deny carries the idea of disavowal. Paul was not referring to temporary denials such as Peter made on the evening before the crucifixion. He had in mind those who continue to reject Christ in this life. They will face Him in the judgment when He will also deny them.

Verse 13 reminds us that when we are at our worst, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself. The attributes of Christ are far greater than our failure. The faithless actions of humans do not alter the faithful character of Christ. He is faithful to deliver judgment and justice to unbelievers, and He is faithful to sustain believers who neglect to rely upon Him during spiritual battles. Jesus never fails to remain true to His promises. He consistently and forever acts in perfect concert with His nature. Believers cannot always rely upon their strength, but they must always rely upon the strength of Christ and His faithfulness.

How does focusing on Christ’s faithfulness to us help us persevere in faithfulness to Him?

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**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).
IN MY CONTEXT

• Believers are to invest in the lives of future church leaders.
• Believers must remain focused on the gospel when facing hardships, knowing God will reward their faithfulness.
• Believers can take strength in knowing that their faithful witness opens doors for the gospel to be heard and believed.

*In whom are you investing as a future Christian leader? How are you doing so?*

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*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?*

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*Identify the challenges you currently face. How can you use each challenge as a vehicle for sharing the gospel with others?*

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Prayer Needs
DILIGENT

Believers find truth and direction by studying God’s Word.

2 TIMOTHY 2:14-26

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.

Name some examples of diligence you see in the world. What are some ways in which diligence is needed in the Christian life?
As Paul wrote this final epistle, his primary concern was for Timothy to remain solidly secure in his spiritual heritage. He also wanted his protégé to warn the Ephesian believers against the encroaching danger of false teachers. Finally, Paul addressed specific examples of opposition to the gospel.

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

Earlier in chapter two, 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 was to warn these church leaders about the pseudo-gospel and then how to deal with the false teachers. Teaching requires being a good role model. As Timothy stood firm in his ministry of the Word, his charges witnessed the courage and faithfulness they should follow.

Paul’s love for his son in the ministry led him to repeatedly offer pointed pleas for diligence. Timothy was 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 depended on 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.

As you read 2 Timothy 2:14-26, notice the different words and phrases used to encourage Timothy to focus on God’s truth. Why do you think Paul continually reminded Timothy to steer clear of verbal squabbles?
Explore the Text

Two Groups (2 Tim. 2:14-19)

14 Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to fight about words. This is useless and leads to the ruin of those who listen. 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. 16 Avoid irreverent and empty speech, since those who engage in it will produce even more godlessness, and their teaching will spread like gangrene. Hymenaeus and Philetus are among them. 17 They have departed from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and are ruining the faith of some. 18 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.

Verse 14

The church at Ephesus faced internal conflict. False teachers were stirring strife and spreading heresy. Paul’s admonition to Timothy to remind the church suggests that new ideas were not needed, but rather truths previously taught needed reinforcement in light of the challenges the church faced. These things included the fundamentals of the gospel laid out in previous verses. The warning not to fight about words was a necessary directive against bickering over non-essentials.

One of the catastrophic consequences of word wars is the precious time and energy it wastes on useless arguments. It is time taken away from weightier matters—sharing the gospel, teaching God’s truth, building up believers, serving the helpless, and demonstrating the love of Christ.

One of the catastrophic consequences of word wars is the precious time and energy it wastes on useless arguments.

Verse 15

Be diligent carried the idea of meticulous urgency. In order to withstand antagonists and fortify believers, Timothy needed to give urgent devotion and maximum effort to communicate and live the
gospel. He was accountable to God and therefore must seek approval from Him rather than seek applause from others.

Paul challenged Timothy to be a worker who doesn’t need to be ashamed. An ashamed worker was one who wasted time in useless arguments and embraced deceptive doctrines. Shame awaits those who neglect giving the best of their gifts and energy to glorify Christ and edify His church.

An approved worker correctly teaches the word of truth. The expression correctly teaching is derived from a single Greek word that denotes the process of cutting a straight line on a garment or cutting a straight path through a forest. Accordingly, Paul wanted 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.

VERSES 16-18

The corrosive influence of false teachers carried an alluring appeal. Timothy needed to be wise and watchful. He could not allow himself to be baited into conversations that were godless and void of edification. Such speech produced a downward spiral into excessive deception.

Paul warned that the teaching of the false teachers would produce even more godlessness and would spread like gangrene. The comparison of false teaching with gangrene was graphic because gangrene was usually a fatal infection in the body. The spread of deceptive teaching had a spiritually deadening effect.

•Hymenaeus and •Philetus were two individuals promoting deadly doctrines in the church. Paul previously mentioned Hymenaeus as someone with a shipwrecked faith (1 Tim. 1:19-20). Apparently, this man had continued to wield a contaminating influence and his partner Philetus may have been equally deceptive.

The specific error of the false teachers was their claim that the resurrection had 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

In spite of opposition from false teachers who tried to demolish the bedrock of the gospel, Paul stated that God’s solid foundation stands firm. Regardless of how furious the wind of heresy blew against the church, it could not shake God’s plan.

God’s solid foundation bears a two-part inscription. The term inscription denoted a seal of authenticity and ownership carved into something. The first part of the inscription, The Lord knows those who are his, recalls the words of Moses to Korah when Korah and his followers rebelled against Moses (Num. 16:4-5). God’s punishment served as a reminder that He knows those who are true followers and those who are pretenders. Timothy could be encouraged by the reality that nothing escapes God’s discernment.

True followers of Christ demonstrate genuine belief by right behavior.

The second part of the inscription points to human responsibility: let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness. This recalls a challenge of Isaiah to Israel (Isa. 52:11) as well as an exhortation from the psalmist (Ps. 34:14). True followers of Christ demonstrate genuine belief by right behavior. God’s saving grace calls for a holy commitment from those who have been saved. The wickedness taught by Hymanaeus and Philetus had no place among the people of God. Such false teaching ultimately leads to moral corruption.

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)

20 Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also those of wood and clay; some for honorable use and some for dishonorable. 21 So if anyone purifies himself from anything dishonorable, he will be a special instrument, set apart, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. 22 Flee from youthful
passions, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

VERSES 20-21
To emphasize the importance of godliness, Paul employed a metaphor about two kinds of vessels in a house. Some of the vessels 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—a representation of the church—some people fulfill God’s purpose while others are not so faithful. Some believers honor Jesus by their behavior and belief, while others dishonor him by their lifestyle. Some magnify Jesus and others minimize Him.

Timothy could not have missed Paul’s point that Jesus desires an honorable and clean vessel for His purpose. An honorable servant for Jesus was marked by three traits. First, such a person was set apart. This included separation from false teachers like Hymenaeus and Philetus. Second, an honorable servant was useful to the Master. God will not use people who cling to sin. Third, such a person would be prepared for every good work. A prepared worker was one who was equipped and ready for anything God wanted to do through them.

VERSE 22
Flee and pursue were crucial imperatives for Timothy. Paul instructed him to run from youthful passions like a fugitive escaping capture. The wrong desires Timothy was urged to avoid were not limited to the sexual lusts of a young person. They included arrogance, self-indulgence, obsessive ambition, and a fixation on worldly pleasure.

Paul also directed Timothy to pursue four virtues. Righteousness indicated right conduct fueled by a right relationship with Christ. Faith referred to complete trust in Christ, while love signified Christlike affection for others. When believers love with godly love, they naturally experience peace with other believers.

Consequently, Timothy’s discipline of fleeing and pursuing would find welcome company in others who call on the Lord.
from a pure heart. Fellowship with like-minded believers would help Timothy run from inappropriate passions and run toward holy virtues.

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?

BIBLE SKILL: Use a Bible concordance to find other uses of a word.

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?

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

23 But reject foolish and ignorant disputes, because you know that they breed quarrels. 24 The Lord’s servant must not quarrel, but must be gentle to everyone, able to teach, and patient, 25 instructing his opponents with gentleness. Perhaps God will grant them repentance leading them to the knowledge of the truth. 26 Then they may come to their senses and escape the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

VERSES 23-26

Timothy needed to distinguish between unworthy arguments and edifying debates. Paul himself was a rigorous defender of truth and had already encouraged Timothy to guard the sacred deposit of truth (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14). Here, Paul was telling Timothy to reject
human speculation that undermined divine revelation. Sanctification should never be jettisoned in favor of fabrication.

False teachers loved to instigate quarrels. Paul wanted Timothy to steer clear of their drama. Timothy needed to model three traits to minimize quarreling. First, he must be gentle to everyone. It’s easy to be gentle toward gentle people, but Timothy’s challenge included gentleness toward the false teachers. Gentleness can sometimes defuse drama. It can often serve as a beckoning light, inviting confused seekers to come out of the darkness.

Second, Timothy must be able to teach. The term teach included more than knowledge of a subject. It specifically referred to an ability to effectively communicate knowledge in a manner that enhanced learning and understanding of God’s truth.

Third, Timothy needed to be patient. Patience was necessary in a difficult environment, like Ephesus, where spiritual growth of new converts was hindered by controversy and heresy. Patience is not weakness. It is a strong fruit of the Spirit. (See Gal. 5:22.)

The purpose for instructing his opponents with gentleness was the hope that God would grant them repentance. To embrace the truth, they needed to renounce heresy and agree with God’s Word.

In addition, Paul wanted the opponents to come to their senses and escape the trap of the devil. The enemy sets his snares about unsuspecting people, taking them captive. Instead of following the Lord, they do the devil’s will. Their hearts and minds are darkened, preventing them from seeing the truth. Believers are to present God’s Word with love and kindness so unbelievers may escape Satan’s snare.

What are the benefits of a kind and gentle approach to communicating the gospel message? How does this approach break down barriers?

**KEY DOCTRINE: Evangelism and Missions**

The new birth of man’s spirit by God’s Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others (Gal. 5:6).
IN MY CONTEXT

• Believers must continue to study God’s Word to avoid being led astray.
• Believers must intentionally flee sin and pursue righteousness to be useful in God’s work.
• Believers are to present God’s Word to others with love and kindness.

Identify some younger believers in your church you can mentor. How can you encourage them to make godly choices?

Discuss steps your Bible study group can take to avoid unedifying conversations. Create a set of guidelines based on the discussion.

What person do you regularly encounter who is antagonistic toward the gospel? What principles discovered in this study can you follow when approaching this person in the future?

Prayer Needs
Enduring

Believers must remain faithful to God’s truth even when facing persecution.

2 Timothy 3:12-17; 4:1-8

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.

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?
Paul was confined to a Roman prison awaiting execution for his faith in Christ. There he wrote his final recorded words to Timothy. He wanted Timothy to know that every follower of Christ would face some form of persecution and that hostility against the gospel would continue. Impostors would rise up, and their deceptive belief and behavior would continue to get worse.

Paul strongly emphasized to Timothy the necessity of being grounded in Scripture; it was God-breathed and without error. It would sustain him and the church as he utilized it for teaching God’s truth, rebuking those who walked in deception, correcting those who needed spiritual restoration, and training believers to conform their lives to God’s righteousness.

Accordingly, Paul commanded Timothy to publicly proclaim the message of the gospel. The foremost task of the church was to proclaim the gospel to all people. Paul expected Timothy to be ready to declare God’s truth in favorable or unfavorable times, making the most of every opportunity.

Paul didn’t want Timothy to be unprepared for people’s reactions to his preaching. Some would not tolerate sound doctrine, but would chase the trendy ideas of false teachers. Paul explained that they would turn away from the truth and turn toward senseless myths. It would, therefore, be of utmost importance for Timothy to keep a clear mind during those confusing and chaotic times. He would need perseverance as he encountered hardship and persecution. He would also need to seize the opportunities to faithfully evangelize and share the message of salvation in fulfillment of his ministry for Christ.

Paul hoped Timothy could visit him before his death. He testified that his life was a drink offering that was poured out to the glory of God.

As you read 2 Timothy 3:12-17 and 4:1-8, underline the commands given by Paul. Why was Paul so urgent in giving these commands?
EXPLORE THE TEXT

PERSECUTION COMING (2 TIM. 3:12-13)

12 In fact, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 13 Evil people and impostors will become worse, deceiving and being deceived.

VERSES 12-13

Persecution didn’t surprise Paul, and he didn’t want it to surprise Timothy. He warned that all believers who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will face persecution.

Followers of Christ in many nations around the world experience life-threatening persecution. They take great risks to worship the Lord and to share the gospel message. Believers who live outside an area experiencing persecution should not assume, however, that this verse has no personal relevance. When we stand upon godly values in any secular culture and when we strive to live in loving obedience to Christ we can expect to meet with some form of resistance and opposition.

It is important to make a distinction between opposition, bullying, and persecution. It is certainly disturbing when followers of Christ are denied job promotions because of their faith, but such is the opposition in some places. It is more alarming when followers of Christ are intimidated and badgered for their faith, but such is the pain of bullying. When followers of Christ are arrested and tortured for their faith, it is the cauldron of anger and hatred boiling into persecution.

Paul made it clear that the spread of malice and violence would not go away; it would become worse. Jesus warned His disciples that they should not expect any better treatment than He had received (John 15:18-20). People who hate Jesus will oppose His followers. Our honor is to suffer with Christ.

How does seeking to live a godly life lead to potential bullying and persecution?
GET EQUIPPED *(2 TIM. 3:14-17)*

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, and you know that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

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.

**VERSES 14-15**

Paul urged Timothy to *continue* practicing the foundational truths he had *learned* and *firmly believed*. Timothy would have to guard against pastoral pitfalls and doctrinal deviations that could dampen his spiritual fire. He had learned many of the essential themes of the gospel from his mother and grandmother, and especially from Paul. Paul’s impact on Timothy was gigantic and Paul wanted him to press on faithfully with full assurance.

Timothy had been equipped *from infancy* with a knowledge of the *sacred Scriptures*. The expression *sacred Scriptures* referred to the Old Testament. The writings of the Old Testament prepared Timothy in two ways. First, they reveal that salvation has always been by God’s grace through faith. The law was never a means of salvation. Instead, it was a tutor that pointed to Christ. Abraham was not justified by his works, but by faith. (See Gen. 15:6.) The Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi revealed the horror of sin, the reality of judgment, the incomparable grace of God, and the necessity of faith. Second, the Scripture equipped Timothy to be wise in decision making and godly in daily living. 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.

**VERSES 16-17**

The word *inspired* literally means “God breathed.” All Scripture, both the Old Testament and the New Testament, was breathed out from God to divinely-appointed individuals led by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of recording it.

Because Scripture is God’s inspired revelation, it is *profitable* in at least four essential areas. First, it is *profitable for teaching*. The word
teaching describes doctrinal instruction. The content of God’s Word is essential for right doctrine. It is totally true and trustworthy. Second, Scripture is profitable for rebuking. When we stray from the straight path of God’s ways, the Bible warns us of our danger. Such reproof exposes the error of our choices and convicts us of the need to repent. 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 means to “straighten up again.” God’s purpose in dealing with our sin always involves redemption, bringing us back to His way. Finally, Scripture is profitable for training in righteousness. This 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 man of God statement was an expression of encouragement addressed to Timothy specifically but with application for every Christian. The purpose of relying on Scripture was for Timothy to be complete, equipped for every good work. The term complete carries the connotation of spiritual maturity. Scripture provides everything Christians need to perform every good work God places before us.

How does using Scripture for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness (v. 16) equip a believer for “every good work”?

**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).

**PREACH THE WORD** (2 Tim. 4:1-4)

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. 3 For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves
because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths.

**VERSES 1-2**

Paul charged Timothy with the task of proclaiming the gospel under the awareness of Jesus’ judgment of all people, the living and the dead. Timothy could draw motivation for ministry by the anticipation of Jesus’ return. The sure return of Christ serves as a powerful motivation for urgently and clearly communicating the gospel message to every person.

Paul gave Timothy five directives in verse 2. First, Timothy was instructed to preach the word. The word preach involved a public communication on behalf of a superior. In this case, Timothy was to communicate the word of God on behalf of God. He did not have the luxury of sharing personal preferences; he was responsible for faithfully declaring God’s Word. Second, Timothy was to preach in season and out of season. This meant to be prepared to share the good news at all times. The proclamation of the gospel did not depend on Timothy’s mood or life situation.

The third and fourth directives involved rebuking and correcting. Timothy’s preaching would require the necessity of rebuke as he exposed the false teaching and deviant behavior in Ephesus. At the same time, Timothy was to offer correction. Whereas rebuking involved pointing out sin, correcting involved bringing repentant persons to understand God’s truth so that they can adjust their belief and behavior to God’s standard.

Fifth, Timothy would need to encourage with great patience and teaching. By teaching the Word patiently, Timothy would demonstrate love toward the people and trust toward God, depending on God’s Spirit to change human hearts.

**Paul warned about the growing number of people who reject God’s truth in favor of personal preferences.**

**VERSES 3-4**

Paul warned Timothy that people will be increasingly intolerant of the truth of the gospel. Earlier, Paul warned about false teachers. Here, however, he warned about the growing number of people who reject God’s truth in favor of personal preferences. They champion preachers...
who appease their lust for what’s trendy at the expense of God’s unchanging truth.

Paul explained two results of “itching-ear spirituality.” First, people would turn away from hearing the truth. Second, they would turn aside to myths. The expression turn aside was a common medical term to describe a dislocated joint. Individuals who turn away from God’s truth to embrace fabrications and falsehoods suffer a spiritual dislocation.

What are some contemporary examples of “itching-ear” spirituality? How do those examples distort God’s Word?

FINISH WELL (2 TIM. 4:5-8)
5 But as for you, exercise self-control in everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time for my departure is close. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 There is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all those who have loved his appearing.

VERSE 5
Paul called on Timothy to remain faithful to Christ. First, Timothy needed to exercise self-control. The term self-control conveys the idea of personal moderation. It also requires being serious-minded and alert. Second, Timothy must be ready to endure hardship. The easy road of convenience and compromise was not an option. Paul urged Timothy not to give up in the face of opposition, but to endure it. Third, Timothy needed to do the work of an evangelist. One does not need a special gifting to evangelize. The mandate to be Christ’s witnesses applies to every follower of Christ.

VERSES 6-8
Paul used himself as an example for Timothy. He knew his life was approaching the finish line. He believed he would be put to death for his faith in Christ and announced his resolve to finish well. Being poured out as a drink offering referenced a sacrifice to the Lord, honoring His
holiness and goodness. Drink offerings were regular parts of the daily sacrifices in the tabernacle, and later the temple (Ex. 29:38-41). The imagery portrayed Paul’s life being poured out as an offering to the Lord. The term departure pictured a ship disconnecting its ropes from the shore and heading home. An obvious reference to his pending death, Paul knew his time was close upon him.

Reflecting upon his life, Paul affirmed three accomplishments that carried continual implications. First, Paul declared that 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. Second, he had finished the race. He could look back as he was about to cross the finish line and feel satisfaction from a race well run. Third, Paul had kept the faith. More than having faith, this phrase addressed the faith, meaning the faithful adherence to Jesus and His gospel.

In the Roman Empire, champion athletes received a wreath-like crown for their victories. Paul anticipated an eternal crown of righteousness. He did not claim this award for himself alone, but promised it to all those who have loved his appearing. All of us who love Christ and long for His return share an encouraging promise. No matter what trials we might face, our reward is secure with Christ who conquered sin and death to reign forever and ever.

What is the relationship between fighting the good fight and keeping the faith? Can you have one without the other? Explain.

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?
IN MY CONTEXT

- Believers should not be caught off guard when persecution arises.
- Believers can trust the Scriptures as God’s Word.
- Believers must be ready to present the gospel at all times.
- Believers demonstrate the genuineness of their faith by remaining faithful to Christ to the end.

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?

What are you doing to more fully understand and put into practice God’s Word? What actions do you need to take to build on what you are already doing?

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?

Prayer Needs
Living with Opposition

Believers are accountable for rejecting false teachers and teachings.

Titus 1:1-5,10-16

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 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
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 Titus arrived in Macedonia (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6). Titus represented Paul to the Corinthians and brought a report to Paul regarding 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). As 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.

Titus’s 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 letter to Titus.

Similar to First Timothy, Paul’s letter to Titus established guidelines for Titus’ 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 those mentioned in First Timothy.

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.

Read Titus 1:1-16 in your Bible. Write a summary statement of what was happening in the churches of Crete that prompted Paul to write this letter.
EXPLORE THE TEXT

SERVANT’S HEART (TITUS 1:1-3)

1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness, 2 in the hope of eternal life that God, who cannot lie, promised before time began. 3 In his own time he has revealed his word in the preaching with which I was entrusted by the command of God our Savior:

VERSES 1-2

Paul was a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. An apostle was a representative sent on behalf of another person. Paul was sent by Jesus to declare the gospel. He spoke on behalf of and by the authority of Jesus for the faith of God’s elect. The term elect emphasized God’s initiative in salvation. God chose us before we chose Him. He loved us long before we loved Him. The relationship between God’s sovereignty and human will is a tension sustained throughout the Bible.

Paul served also for the knowledge of the truth. He encouraged the spiritual growth of believers by increasing knowledge. He was no mere teacher of philosophy or worldly wisdom. His charge involved truth that leads to godliness.

Paul ministered the gospel so people might live in the hope of eternal life. The word hope referred to the assurance of a future reality. It was a certainty guaranteed by Christ. This hope rested on the character of God, who cannot lie. The phrase before time began emphasizes that, before creation, He planned a way for us to have eternal life.

VERSE 3

God’s promise of redemption was planned before time began, but it was revealed in his own time. Paul mentioned to the Galatians that God revealed it “when the time came to completion” (Gal. 4:4). God invaded time with the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, and Paul was entrusted with the proclamation of this good news. Paul didn’t seek that role, but he was entrusted with it by the command of God our Savior. Paul was responsible to God for preaching the gospel to others. He told the Corinthians he was under obligation to preach the gospel because
it was a stewardship entrusted to him (1 Cor. 9:16-17). Similarly, all believers have been entrusted with the gospel message. All believers share a role in communicating the message of salvation to the lost.

**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?**

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**KEY DOCTRINE: Evangelism and Missions**

It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ (Acts 10:42-48).

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**PURPOSEFUL ACTION (TITUS 1:4-5)**

4 To Titus, my true son in our common faith. Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. 5 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.

**VERSES 4-5**

Paul affectionately called *Titus* his *true son* because he mentored Titus as a father would mentor a son. In other references, Paul called Titus a “brother,” “partner,” and “coworker” (2 Cor. 2:13; 8:23).

The only record in Acts of Paul’s visit to *Crete* occurred during his first trip to Rome as a prisoner, and it is likely that he and Titus ministered there after Paul’s release from his first Roman imprisonment. Crete was a long mountainous island in the Mediterranean Sea stretching approximately 155 miles from east to west. Crete had a significant Jewish population and some of the Jews were mentioned as being in Jerusalem during Pentecost (Acts 2:11).

Paul expected Titus to provide godly leadership at Crete and to *set right what was left undone*. The unfinished part of ministry included the establishment of doctrinal truths to correct the spurious ideas...
of false teachers. Furthermore, mature believers were needed in the churches, so Paul directed Titus to appoint elders in every town. Spiritually gifted and mature men were crucial to the health and growth of the churches. This could imply that the churches in Crete were recently planted and much less developed than the church at Ephesus, where Timothy ministered.

**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?**

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### 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?

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### OPPOSITION ADDRESSED (TITUS 1:10-16)

10 For there are many rebellious people, full of empty talk and deception, especially those from the circumcision party. 11 It is necessary to silence them; they are ruining entire households by teaching what they shouldn’t in order to get money dishonestly. 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. 15 To the pure, everything is pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; in fact, both their mind and conscience are defiled. 16 They claim to
know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work.

VERSES 10-11
Titus was instructed to oversee the churches at Crete and appoint godly leaders capable of refuting the false teachers who stirred trouble and confusion. Three characteristics marked the trouble makers. First, 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. Second, the trouble makers were full of empty talk. Their teaching was full of meaningless speculation. Third, they were deceivers. Not possessing genuine truth, they used oratorical tricks to gain influence for personal advantage.

Paul identified them as from the circumcision party. They were Jewish loyalists who believed that the works of the law, especially circumcision, were necessary for salvation. They persuaded others to embrace a salvation earned through works rather than salvation by grace through faith in Christ.

Several years earlier at Jerusalem, church leaders met to settle the dispute about the means and scope of salvation (Acts 15). In that meeting, the leaders affirmed that Jews and Gentiles were saved in the same way—by grace alone, and that Jewish rituals should not be imposed upon the Gentiles. Whether the false teachers at Crete knew about the decision of the Jerusalem Council is uncertain. What is obvious is that they were threatening the faith of believers by teaching a false gospel.

The gravity of the problem is revealed by Paul’s command to silence them. Titus must take immediate action because they were creating chaos in entire households of believers. The motive behind the false teachers was both selfish and mercenary. They had no interest in declaring the truth about Jesus. Instead, they promoted their own warped ideas about salvation to get money dishonestly. Their teaching may represent an early version of the present day prosperity gospel. They sacrificed truth on the altar of financial gain.

VERSES 12-14
The indictment found in verse 12 should not be misunderstood as an ethnic pejorative but should be seen in its 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, Epimenides 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, however, 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 the idle pursuit of pleasure.

A forceful response to the false teachers was vital to the health of the churches. Failure to confront those who distorted the truth of the gospel would energize the heretics and lead to devastating consequences. Paul urged Titus to rebuke them sharply. The purpose of the rebuke was to bring the ungodly to a repentance that could lead them to become sound in the faith. Paul hoped that a firm reprimand could either drive the perpetrators to their knees confessing their sin or compel them to withdraw from the churches. His goal was first and foremost redemptive and restorative, but he would not overlook the severity of the problem.

The Jewish nature of the false teaching centered on two errors. First, was the error of giving attention to Jewish myths. This included speculative stories loosely connected to the Old Testament and fabricated doctrines that minimized historic truth by sensationalizing fables. The second error involved the commands of people that focused on extra-biblical rituals and rules not from God. Some of these commandments were likely drawn from rabbinic decrees and were embellished to support the legalism pushed by false teachers.

The sad but clear indictment of the heretics was that they reject the truth. They had heard the truth of the gospel but turned away from it to chase after their own creation of truth.

VERSE 15
Paul challenged a perspective about purity and defilement that was popular with the false teachers. He drew a distinction between the pure and the defiled. The pure were those persons who had been cleansed by faith in Christ alone. The defiled were those who insisted on earning the favor of God through adherence to Jewish rules and dietary regulations. The statement, To the pure, everything is pure, highlighted the reality that believers need not fear moral contamination from foods.
they ate; they could view all food as clean. However the statement, *to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure*, highlighted the reality that moral pollution works from the inside out and affects a person’s entire perspective. Nothing could make someone pure who has not experienced the transformation that comes from Christ. No rule keeping, no moral effort, no religious achievement, or ceremonial performance, ever how sincere, could remove the uncleanness in the heart. Internal defilement contaminates the mind and conscience with deceptive beliefs that rationalize sin and justify deviant doctrines.

**VERSE 16**
Cretan false teachers could *claim to know God* but their impressive God talk was not backed up by godly actions. Their false faith revealed itself in false deeds. They professed what they denied and denied what they professed. They were *detestable* to God. The word *detestable* referred to an abhorrent disgust. They were also *disobedient* to the truth of the gospel and to apostolic authority. Moreover, they were *unfit for any good work*. 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 purpose, they proved themselves to be useless in His kingdom.

*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?*

**MAJOR THEMES IN TITUS**
- Qualifications of church leaders (1:6-9)
- Sound doctrine (2:1-15)
- The grace of God (3:3-7)
- The importance of good works (3:1-2,8-11)
IN MY CONTEXT

• Believers have a gospel trust that must be shared with others.
• Believers are called on to help establish and strengthen local churches and church leaders.
• Believers must be willing to address false teachings head on.

What barriers must you overcome to confront false teaching that distorts the gospel? How can you overcome those obstacles?

Share with your Bible study group about a time when your faith was challenged by someone who taught false doctrine. How could you be better prepared to face that challenge in the future?

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.

Prayer Needs
LIVING WITH INTEGRITY

Believers are to live so that they bring honor to Jesus.

TITUS 2:1-15

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.

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
Followers of Christ are expected to be engaged in the world without being enslaved by the world. Paul urged Titus to teach believers at Crete that living with integrity was crucial to their witness for Christ.

Chapter 2 links orthodoxy (right beliefs) with orthopraxy (right living). Paul’s reference to sound teaching not only resonated in contrast to the false teachers but provided the foundation for personal conduct (vv. 1,7). Paul required Titus not only to teach believers to maintain consistent integrity, but also to illustrate this principle in his behavior.

Paul called on the older women to help the younger women learn proper conduct (vv. 3-5). Interestingly, while Paul did not task the older men with training the younger, he told Titus to encourage both regarding godly behavior. Paul gave similar instruction to Timothy (1 Tim. 5:1-2), but his guidance to Titus went into much more detail. 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 (Luke 21:29-36; Mark 13:31-37; Matt. 24:42).

Read Titus 2:1-15 in your Bible. Look for actions and attitudes called for by Paul. What do repeated actions and attitudes reveal about the importance of that specific action or attitude?
EXPLORE THE TEXT

SPoken (Titus 2:1)

1 But you are to proclaim things consistent with sound teaching.

With the contrasting conjunction but, Paul referred to the previous chapter and highlighted the difference between Titus and the rebellious people who were “full of empty talk and deception” (1:10). Unlike their deception, Titus was to speak the truth of the gospel. Paul urged Titus to proclaim things consistent with sound teaching. Paul’s choice of the word proclaim can refer to preaching, but it also involves more informal speech. Titus’s conversations, as well as his teaching and preaching were to be saturated with the truth of the gospel. By remaining faithful to gospel truth, Titus could speak with authority. In the same way, we are to testify to the truth of the gospel.

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)

2 Older men are to be self-controlled, worthy of respect, sensible, and sound in faith, love, and endurance.3 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.6 In the same way, encourage the young men to be self-controlled7 in everything. Make yourself an example of good works with integrity and dignity in your teaching.8 Your message is to be sound beyond reproach, so that any opponent will be ashamed, because he doesn’t have anything bad to say about us.9 Slaves are to submit to their masters in everything, and to be well-pleasing, not talking back 10 or stealing, but demonstrating utter faithfulness, so that they may adorn the teaching of God our Savior in everything.
VERSES 2-5

Paul specified several behavioral qualities that should be evident in believers, regardless of their age, gender, or status. He instructed Titus to teach the older men four priorities. First, they were to be self-controlled. Their lives should reflect moderation and self-restraint. Second, they needed to be worthy of respect. This phrase translates a word meaning to be dignified and honorable. The term emphasizes the way a person generates respect.

Third, they should be sensible. Sometimes translated as “self-controlled,” this meant their speech and actions should demonstrate the spiritual wisdom expected of a mature believer. Fourth, they should be sound in faith, love, and endurance. The term sound expressed the idea of “healthy” in contrast to the diseased ideas of the false teachers. Paul wanted these elders to exemplify qualities others could follow.

Older women were expected to demonstrate similar virtues. First, these women should be reverent in behavior. Generally, one thinks of reverence in terms of attitude toward God. Their character and conduct ought to reflect holy lifestyles.

They must not be slanderers. Although malicious conversation may have been the norm in Cretan culture, older women who followed Christ were expected to shun disparaging talk. They must not be slaves to excessive drinking. Older women needed to be influenced by godliness rather than being controlled by drink so that they could teach what is good.

The godly living of older women would encourage the young women. The older women could motivate by example and help the younger women develop a cohesive Christian family in several ways. They could first encourage the young women to love their husbands and children. Loving relationships not only enabled a family unit to stay strong, but they helped the family bear witness to the presence of Christ. The home provided the training ground for learning to live the gospel.

Older women could also encourage younger women to be self-controlled and pure. They could apply clear thinking so that they may practice purity in all relationships.

The phrase workers at home emphasizes the important role of wives and mothers in the family. 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.) Right relationships in the home were 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.

VERSES 6-8

Young men were generally between twenty and forty years of age and likely married. Whether married or single, the plain teaching about virtuous behavior applied to all young men.

Sometimes the best explanation comes from an example. Therefore, Paul challenged Titus to not only make a difference by his good behavior but to be the difference as he taught other young men of Crete. Titus was urged to communicate the truth of the gospel in a serious and compelling manner so that unbelievers as well as believers would be inspired to listen.

Paul expected Titus to make sure that his message was sound beyond reproach. The term message referred to both the personal conversations of Titus and his public presentation of the gospel. The expression beyond approach carried the idea of something unassailable and beyond the reach of condemnation.

VERSES 9-10

The institution of slavery was widespread in the Roman Empire. Whenever the Roman military conquered a city or community, the prisoners of war became slaves. Consequently, many slaves were educated, racially diverse, and skilled individuals.

Paul did not endorse slavery but offered advice about how believing slaves could turn their cultural condition into a positive testimony for Christ. Paul encouraged them to submit to their masters. Not only would rebellion have put them in danger of being punished, but such action would reflect on Christ. Paul made similar statements in other epistles. (See 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. (See Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1.)
How can the way we live our lives and conduct our business be a means of advancing the gospel?

**EMPOWERED (Titus 2:11-14)**

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. 14 He gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works.

**VERSES 11-13**

The power to live righteously has its source in the grace of God, that has appeared, bringing salvation for all people. Grace is not simply an attitude of God but a saving activity of God. It was not God winking at sin, but God giving His Son as the perfect sacrifice to atone for sin. The demonstrative quality of God’s grace was twofold. First, it appeared with salvation, and second, it was made available to all people. The scope of His grace extends to all who exercise faith in Christ as Savior.

God’s grace instructs us how to live in the present age. The grace of God trains believers to deny godlessness and worldly lusts. To deny means to reject outright. The gospel instructs us not to toy with temptations or yield to desires associated with a sinful culture. Grace in no way offers a license to sin.

Paul used the phrase present age to highlight the adversarial nature of the society in which the Cretans and other believers lived. By maintaining Christlike lives, they bore witness of the transforming power of Jesus.

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 whatever 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. It is the appearing of His glory, and it is a glorious appearing. First, Jesus’ return is one of glory. Jesus was received up into glory and will return in glory. When He appears, believers shall appear with Him in glory. The hope of His glory causes us to rejoice. (See Rom. 5:2.) Second, this glory belongs to our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Previously, Paul referred to God as “our Savior” (Titus 1:3; 2:10), while also calling Jesus “our Savior” (1:4). In this verse, he described Jesus as our great God and Savior. Paul used these terms interchangeably because both are true. God the Father and Jesus the Son are equally God and Savior. The magnitude of this truth supersedes human reasoning, but on that great day we shall see our Lord in His glory and rejoice in His appearing.

KEY DOCTRINE: Salvation (Sanctification)
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).

VERSE 14
Paul affirmed that the Savior whose return is anticipated is the same one who gave himself for us. Jesus’ death on the cross was a voluntary sacrifice and a substitutionary event because it was on our behalf and for us. The object of Jesus’ death was first to redeem us from all lawlessness. The verb redeem referred to releasing a captive for a ransom. Christ’s death was the ransom that satisfied God’s justice and holiness and liberated believers from lawless deeds. A second object of Jesus’ death was to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works. The desire to live holy lives and pursue activities that please the Lord is because He cleansed us and set us apart to represent Him in this world.

How do you see evidence of Christ’s power in you for godly living?
**AUTHORITY** *(TITUS 2:15)*

15 Proclaim these things; encourage and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

**VERSE 15**

*These things* included all of Paul’s instructions to Titus. The verbs *proclaim ... encourage and rebuke* are all imperatives that emphasized a serious command under the authority of Paul, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was well aware of the criticism Titus could receive from false teachers and immature believers. Consequently, he reminded Titus to live and lead in such a manner that no one could *disregard* him.

*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.*
IN **MY CONTEXT**

- Believers are to testify in word to the truth of the gospel.
- Believers are to demonstrate godliness in their lives regardless of their age or station in life.
- Believers can live godly lives though the power of the gospel.
- Believers are to teach godliness boldly in the authority of Jesus.

**Commit to representing Christ well each day this week. Ask that God give you an opportunity to boldly proclaim Christ to at least one person. Record how God answered that prayer.**

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**Review the actions listed in these passages, identifying the ones in which you excel and the ones on which you need to give more attention. What steps can you take to increase in the actions you identified as needing more attention?**

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**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.**

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**Prayer Needs**

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Believers should look for opportunities to do good works as acts of worship.

**TITUS 3:1-11**

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.

*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?*
TITUS 3:1-15
Understanding Paul’s epistle 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.

The opening verses of chapter 3 refer back to the people addressed in chapter 2. Paul had given instructions about how Titus should teach various groups about character and 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 emphasized how God had bestowed mercy and grace in their lives in spite of terrible sins. Just as the Lord had transformed them, He could work in and through the Cretan believers to demonstrate His transforming power.

Despite their best efforts, Paul and Titus would still encounter opponents outside and within the churches. Paul urged his son in the ministry to avoid useless debates and remain true to the message. People who believed the gospel should give themselves to live accordingly.

Titus’ work was urgent because 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’ pastoral ministry required strengthening the disciples in their faith and in their walk with Christ.

As you read Titus 3:1-11, list the actions Paul called on Titus to encourage. How is a believer’s good behavior connected to the gospel message?
EXPLORE THE TEXT

GOOD DEEDS (TITUS 3:1-2)

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.

VERSES 1-2

Christians in Crete needed to be reminded that godly behavior could influence unbelievers to embrace the gospel. Paul instructed Titus to remind them to submit to rulers and authorities. Paul was not advocating blind allegiance that required believers to violate God’s authority. He was encouraging believers to be respectful citizens living under the rules and regulations of Roman government. Obedience to those in authority is part of God’s plan for order and peace. (See Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17)

Paul hoped the believers serving in the churches at Crete could work to make life better for those who ruled and for those who lived under the rulers. By being ready for every good work they could have a wide opportunity to validate their faith in Christ through civic duty.

Titus needed to remind believers to demonstrate their salvation in four ways. First, they should not slander anyone. While believers have a right to disagree with political policies, they are not to engage in verbal assassination and evil talk about those in authority. Second, they should avoid fighting. Believers have a responsibility to be peacemakers rather than brawlers. Third, they should be kind. Kindness opens doors of ministry that enable the gospel message to spread. Fourth, they should show consistent gentleness to all people. Gentleness is not weakness, but strength under the control of Christ. As believers showed the evidence of their transformation through Christ, they could build bridges conveying His grace toward all people.

Why was it important for believers to submit to the authority of government? How does being a responsible citizen impact how others view Christians?
BASED ON HIS MERCY (TITUS 3:3-7)

3 For we too were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another. 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, 5 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. 6 He poured out his Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life.

VERSE 3

The work of Christ in Paul was revealed by the transparent confession he made regarding his life prior to salvation. By using the pronoun we, Paul included himself and Titus. The phrase were once indicates the contrast between a believer’s degenerate past and a regenerate present life. As Paul pointed out the vices that characterized the life of an unbeliever, he was describing a broad sample rather than an exhaustive list.

He referred first to being foolish because a spiritually lost person does not comprehend God’s plan or His truths. Second, unsaved persons are disobedient and deceived because they reject God’s authority and allow themselves to be led astray by Satan. Next, unsaved individuals

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?

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are characterized as *enslaved by various passions and pleasures*. They are enslaved to the lusts of their flesh and live in bondage to pleasures that cannot satisfy their deepest need. Fourth, they live in *malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another*. The portrait of a degenerate life is set in the frame of enmity and painted with the stains of ill will and restless discontent. Hatred was the full fruit of depravity that led to fractured relationships, murder, greed, racism, rejection of God’s truth, and withholding love from others.

Paul’s purpose in calling attention to the traits of degeneracy was two-fold. First, he wanted to stress the crucial need of Christlike behavior toward unsaved persons. Second, he wanted to emphasize that, as followers of Christ, we were once driven by the same sins that now disgust us. Therefore, it should humble us and remind us not to look upon unbelievers with scorn or contempt.

**VERSES 4-5**

There is a phenomenal difference between a life mired in depravity and a life made new by Christ. Paul wanted Titus to remind believers to live in the profound reality of God’s gift of salvation—a salvation based on God’s attributes and actions instead of our merit and actions. God’s *kindness* and *love* was revealed in the incarnation of His Son as our Savior. His kindness united with His love was not merely an emotional posture but a redeeming action. Our human predicament was so hopeless that the only possible way to be saved was by a divine rescue orchestrated by *God our Savior*.

**Salvation is not a matter of what we do—it is a matter of what Jesus has done.**

Paul clearly stated that the basis of salvation was revealed and accomplished by the work of Christ and *not by works of righteousness* that were performed. Paul was emphasizing that salvation is not a matter of what we do—it is a matter of what Jesus has done. Good works are the result of salvation, not the cause of salvation. Consequently, Paul explained that believers are saved according to God’s *mercy*. While mercy is similar to grace, it can be distinguished in this regard: Grace refers to God generously providing the forgiveness that we don’t deserve, while mercy refers to God tenderly withholding the condemnation we do deserve.
Paul explained that salvation was a singular event described by several different terms. **Washing** was a metaphor to describe the spiritual cleansing associated with salvation. While it can serve as a picture for baptism, it must not be assumed that baptism carries a saving function. A believer is not saved by the ordinance of baptism, but a believer is baptized as a testimony and a picture of the cleansing power of the Savior.

The term **regeneration** denoted life or rebirth that results from a saving relationship with Christ. Regeneration is a work imparted by Him to a believer that results in **renewal by the Holy Spirit**. All three persons of the Trinity are involved in salvation. The Holy Spirit indwells a believer at the moment of salvation and remains for the purpose of guiding, teaching, and empowering a believer to bear godly fruit, to share the gospel message, and to live victoriously over temptation.

**VERSES 6-7**

The Holy Spirit was not given partially to believers as if He was withholding Himself. Instead, the spirit was **poured out** lavishly as evidence that He is abundantly sufficient for every need in a believer’s life. The Spirit that indwelt Paul and Titus is the same Spirit that indwells believers today.

The phrase **so that** in verse 7 indicates an objective reality regarding salvation and introduced the status of justification. Prior to salvation, all men and women are alienated from God and stand condemned. However, once an unbeliever trusts Jesus as Savior and relies on Him to forgive sin, God pronounces that person **justified**. On the basis of Jesus’ atoning death, God pronounces a believer to be acquitted and free from condemnation.

Justification is a declaration that occurs **by his grace** so that believers are classified as righteous **heirs with the hope of eternal life**. An **heir** referred to a legitimate member of a family who inherited a designated wealth. Believers are children in God’s family who have received spiritual riches. As heirs, we experience the present benefits of His riches while anticipating the guaranteed fullness of eternity with Him.

**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)

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. 9 But avoid foolish debates, genealogies, quarrels, and disputes about the law, because they are unprofitable and worthless. 10 Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning. 11 For you know that such a person has gone astray and is sinning; he is self-condemned.

VERSE 8
The foundational truths of the gospel that Paul previously emphasized in verses 4-7 comprised another trustworthy saying. He wanted Titus to insist on those truths. The word insist carried the idea of strong reinforcement. Titus needed to firmly assure the believers about God’s Word so that they might be careful to devote themselves to good works. Behaving the gospel is a reliable indicator of believing the gospel. Healthy doctrine is verified by holy living. Believers were expected to carefully devote themselves to doing good deeds that honored Christ. Paul explained that such activity was good and profitable for everyone. Godly service not only benefits others, it also blesses the ones doing it. Deeds of ministry to unbelievers as well as believers are not options that Paul left open. Instead, they are necessary activities of a disciplined and devoted follower of Christ. A life yielded to Christ will inevitably produce spiritual fruit that enriches a family, a church, and a community.

VERSE 9
To the extent that the believers at Crete could involve themselves in edifying ministries based on sound teaching, they could curb harmful discussions. Consequently, Paul reminded Titus to steer clear of several detrimental activities. First, Titus needed to avoid foolish
debates. Rather than engage in a war of words, Titus could take the high road and refuse the bait of debate from false teachers. Paul was not instructing Titus to shun honest discussions about vital spiritual issues. He was pleading with him to keep away from silly and reckless disputes.

Second, Paul warned Titus about genealogies. Paul had in mind the spurious interpretations of genealogies provided by the false teachers. Third, Paul urged Titus to curtail quarrels because they stirred strife and divisiveness. Fourth, Titus needed to elude disputes about the law. False teachers enjoyed controversies over trivialities in the Jewish law and took a measure of delight in minimizing the redeeming work of Christ in favor of a legalistic salvation.

How might engaging with quarrels and controversies over trivialities get in the way of living out the gospel and honoring God though our works?

VERSES 10-11
Paul proposed to Titus a clear and simple procedure for dealing with a divisive person. Divisiveness posed a serious threat to first-century churches just as it does to twenty-first century churches. The Greek word translated divisive is related to the words “heretical,” “heretic,” and “heresy.” A divisive person could hinder the mission of the church and tear apart the harmony among believers. The procedure for managing a divisive person involved a three-strikes-and-you-are-out approach. The divisive man or woman was to receive two warnings and then be rejected. Paul matched the severity of the problem with the severity of the solution. Condoning the divisive person’s activity could expose the churches to the wolves of heresy. Accordingly, the proper solution was to deny fellowship with such a person and to reject their teaching.

Fractious individuals who rejected godly correction and continued to spread enmity and strife proved themselves to have gone astray. Such a strong description was indicative of persons with a warped conscience who remained spiritually corrupt. Furthermore, they were self-condemned because their persistence in promoting untruths and their refusal to confess their sin amounted to a self-indictment of guilt.
IN MY CONTEXT

• Believers demonstrate their faith through godly actions.
• Salvation offered through faith in Christ moves believers to good works.
• By avoiding useless debates, believers can concentrate on honoring God through doing good works.

To what actions over the past week can you point that demonstrate your faith in Christ? How can you more clearly demonstrate your faith in Christ?

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.

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.

Prayer Needs
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 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: “He established a testimony in Jacob and set up a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children” (v. 5). 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:  
• 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 point in Deuteronomy 6: 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.
Session 1  Rejoice  > Ephesians 1:3-14
Session 2  Remembered  > Ephesians 1:15-23
Session 3  Resurrected  > Ephesians 2:1-10
Session 4  Reconciled  > Ephesians 2:11-22
Session 5  Revealed  > Ephesians 3:1-13
Session 6  Residence  > Ephesians 3:14-21
Session 7  Walking Together  > Ephesians 4:1-10
Session 8  Walking Forward  > Ephesians 4:11-16
Session 9  Walking Differently  > Ephesians 4:17-32
Session 10  Walking in Love  > Ephesians 5:1-14
Session 11  Walking Wisely  > Ephesians 5:15-21
Session 12  Walking as Family  > Ephesians 5:22–6:4
Session 13  Walking to Battle  > Ephesians 6:10-20
The World of Paul, Timothy, and Titus


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1,2 Timothy; Titus

The Christian life is a life of blessing but comes with its share of challenges. Whether the challenge is dealing with difficult people, confronting false doctrinal teaching, or how to disciple another believer, Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus leave no rock unturned. The apostle speaks from seemingly every possible angle about the Christian life. The Pastoral Letters resound with passion for the gospel, priorities for church leadership, prescriptions against false teaching, and practical guidelines for godly living. These studies from 1,2 Timothy and Titus tackle challenging issues with clarity and provide helpful answers that will lead you to have a better grasp of truth.