



1717 BIBLE STUDIES

"Your Word Is Truth" (John 17:17)

OVERVIEW

Study: 1 Timothy Theme: Build Christ's Church

Overview: First Timothy is Paul's initial letter to his young associate Timothy, who he had instructed to remain in the church as a young minister. Paul warns Timothy to maintain correct doctrine within the church, to worship properly, and to raise up godly leaders within the church. This is a letter of practical advice for every Christian and for the full body of Christ.

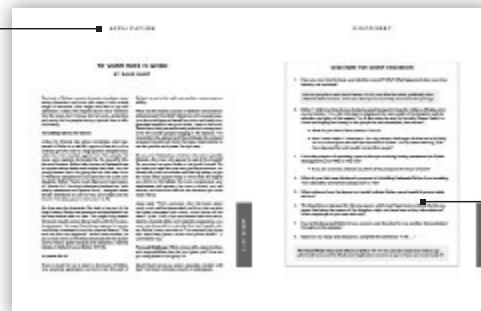
HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

INTRODUCTION

Author

The apostle Paul identified himself as the author of 1 Timothy in the first verse of the first chapter of his letter. While some have questioned Paul's authorship of the two letters to Timothy, there's no legitimate reason for doubting Paul's authorship or suggesting someone else as the author of these letters.

Audience

Paul's letter was specifically written to Timothy, his "true son in the faith" (1:2, 1:18). Timothy first appears in Acts 16, during Paul's second missionary journey. He was from Asia Minor (the modern country of Turkey), born to a Greek father and a Jewish mother (Eunice) who, along with his grandmother (Lois), was a convert to Christianity (Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5). All indications are that Timothy became a Christian soon after meeting Paul and he accompanied the apostle on his additional travels. Paul served as a mentor to Timothy, who became one of his most trusted companions. When Paul departed for Macedonia, he left Timothy in Ephesus to provide leadership and instruction to the church (1:3). It was at this church where Timothy received this letter. Paul concludes the letter by writing, "Grace be with you" (6:21). His use of a plural form of "you" suggests that Paul meant for the letter to be read publicly to everyone in the church at Ephesus.

Date

First Timothy appears to have been written after Paul's release from his imprisonment in Rome at about AD 63 (after the final recorded events of Acts 28). Paul likely wrote 1 Timothy around AD 65.

Setting

Paul is generally thought to have established the church in Ephesus during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21) and to have ministered in Ephesus for over two years (Acts 19:8-10) during his third missionary journey. The departure of Paul from Ephesus to Macedonia (which may be a part of his traditional fourth missionary journey), as noted in 1 Timothy 1:3, occurred after Paul's release from his Roman imprisonment and after the final events of the book of Acts. With his departure, Paul directed Timothy to "stay there in Ephesus," serving as a minister to the church in Ephesus and instructing them in sound doctrine.

Theme

In chapter 3, verse 14, Paul tells Timothy that he is writing "these instructions so that ... you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth." Paul's themes for this instruction include proper doctrine (1:1-20; 4:1-16), true worship (2:1-15; 6:3-21), and Christian leadership (3:1-16; 5:1-25).

Why Study 1 Timothy?

First Timothy is one of Paul's pastoral letters, along with 2 Timothy and Titus. This book is valuable for its instruction regarding false teachings, the value of sound doctrine, worship within the church, proper conduct for Christians, and both church and family leadership for followers of Jesus.

STUDY CONTENT

WEEK 1: 1 Timothy 1:12-19; 6:11-16

WEEK 2: 1 Timothy 2:1-8

WEEK 3: 1 Timothy 3:1-16; 5:17-22

WEEK 4: 1 Timothy 4:6-16

WEEK ONE

LESSON AIM: **Join Christ in the good fight of faith.**

STUDY: 1 Timothy

THEME: Build Christ's Church

LESSON TEXT: 1 Timothy 1:12-19; 6:11-16

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Matthew 28:18-20; John 18:33-37; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Colossians 1:28–2:2

STUDY

FIGHT

BY MARK SCOTT

It is difficult to misunderstand such one-word commands as “quiet,” “stop,” “go,” or “run.” The next several lessons have titles that are one-word imperatives. When we obey them in a scriptural context, we help “build God’s church.” These lessons come from what are known as the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus).

The Christian life is likened to a race, a journey, an athletic contest, and a battle (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Hebrews 12:1; Ephesians 6:10-20). Believers are to be battle-ready and battle-tested. In a word, we are to *fight*. Paul told Timothy to *fight the battle well* (1 Timothy 1:18). The word for *fight* means to be a soldier or lead an army. Paul also told Timothy to fight the good fight of the faith (1 Timothy 6:12). The word for *fight* there means to struggle or to agonize. Paul used it of his own life’s struggle in 2 Timothy 4:7. While we fight differently than the world does (2 Corinthians 10:4-5), we still fight.

Saved to Fight

1 Timothy 1:12-17

This is one of the most self-disclosing passages of the apostle Paul. In the literary context, his life is set over against those of the false teachers that Timothy is to wage war against (1 Timothy 1:3-11). Paul’s previous life in sin is contrasted with God’s merciful redemption of him. If we learn anything from this powerful paragraph, it is that there is some value in remembering past sins. We can realize that we have been saved to fight.

Paul thanked (gave grace to) Christ Jesus for giving him strength (literally, “clothed with strength”). Knowing what he used to be, Paul was ever grateful that God would consider him *trustworthy* by placing him into service. On the debit side of his ledger were his sins: *blasphemer* (liar or slanderer), *persecutor* (one who hunted down Christians—Acts 22:4-5; 26:9-11), and *violent man* (insolent). On the credit side of his ledger were God’s wonderful attributes: *mercy* (tender kindness when we feel helpless), *grace* (love for us that is undeserved but which is poured out in superabundant ways when we feel worthless), and *faith and love that are in Christ Jesus*.

Paul was keenly aware he had been saved for a purpose. At the heart of his personal testimony, he gave the first of five “faithful sayings” of the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:11; Titus 3:8). The formula he used to underline God’s saving purpose means

something on the order of, “take this to the bank.” *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*. Paul proclaimed that he was the *worst sinner* (he calls himself the “least” in 1 Corinthians 15:9; Ephesians 3:8). That made God’s *patience* and Paul’s *example* all the more powerful. No wonder Paul ended this testimony with a profound doxology (v. 17).

Inspiring Others to Fight

1 Timothy 1:18-19; 6:11-16

Paul was saved to fight. But he wanted to equip others to fight as well. So, he encouraged his son in the faith, Timothy—who perhaps was timid (2 Timothy 1:7)—to stay in the battle. Keeping this *command* (cf. 1 Timothy 1:3) would be easier if Timothy would remember the *prophecies once made* about him (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). Paul does not say what those prophecies were. It would also be easier if Timothy would hold on to *faith and a good conscience* in contrast to what others had done. Paul went on to mention two men (Hymenaeus and Alexander—1 Timothy 1:20) who “shipwrecked” their faith. This expression is used in a literal sense about Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:25, but here it is used figuratively of what can happen when someone gives up the battle.

The final charge to Timothy in this Epistle comes in the context of comparing Timothy as God’s man with the subject of money. This passage relates how false teachers misuse money (1 Timothy 6:3-10) and how rich Christians need to use their wealth wisely (6:17-19). To fight the good fight, Timothy will have to *flee* any love of money, *take hold* of six different Christian virtues, and remember his *good confession*. This good confession of Timothy (which perhaps occurred in Acts 14:21) was rooted in Christ’s original good confession before Pontius Pilate (John 18:36-37). Timothy was to keep his confession of faith *without spot or blame* until *the appearing* (manifestation) of Jesus, which would happen on God’s timetable. Similar to the earlier paragraph, Paul ended this section with a doxology (1 Timothy 6:15-16). Even God’s greatest enemies can become his finest servants ready to fight (John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*).

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APPLICATION

HOW TO HAVE A GOOD FIGHT

BY DAVID FAUST

Ironically, it was a fighter who informed us that peace is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Paul compared himself to a boxer swinging punches (1 Corinthians 9:26). He saw the Christian life as a battle against dark spiritual powers (Ephesians 6:12). As death approached, he said, "I have fought the good fight" (2 Timothy 4:7).

Not all fights are good. Some are petty or even humorous. The author Kevin Leman quips, "My wife and I live in a two-story house. On most any issue, she has her story and I have mine." Followers of the Prince of Peace, even whole denominations, spend too much time bickering among themselves. Mark Twain is said to have joked that he put a dog and a cat together in a cage as an experiment to see if they could get along. They did, so he put in a bird, a pig, and a goat. After a few adjustments, they got along too. Then he put in a Baptist, a Presbyterian, and a Catholic, and soon there was not a living thing left!

What makes a fight good?

Right Cause

We don't have to debate every subject and offer opinions on every issue that comes along. "Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels" (2 Timothy 2:23). Marvin Phillips said, "Satan's greatest weapon has been to keep the people of God arguing about lesser things."

But some causes are worth fighting for. Nehemiah urged, "Fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes" (Nehemiah 4:14). Paul flexibly adapted his methods of presenting the gospel to different audiences, but he remained firm and unbending about the gospel message itself (1 Corinthians 9:19-23; 15:1-3). Jude said to show mercy toward doubters, but "contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people" (Jude 3, 22). Let's choose our battles wisely.

Right Motivation

Political candidates promise, "I will fight for you," but are they in the race mainly to satisfy their own egos and push their own agendas? The "good fight" is motivated by love for God and neighbors, not by selfish ambition.

Right Methods

Christians shouldn't fight dirty. It dishonors God if we try to win battles by compromising our ethical principles or relying on our own cleverness. "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God" (Psalm 20:7).

When Paul told Timothy to "fight the battle well" (1 Timothy 1:18), he used the word *strateuomai* (from which we derive *strategy*) to describe the fight. Later he instructed Timothy, "Fight the good fight of the faith" (1 Timothy 6:12), and here he used *agonizomai* (the source of our word *agony*). Even in *agonizing* situations, our strategies must align with God's will. "We do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world" (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).

Right Outcome

Though he endured many struggles, Paul looked forward to "the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day" (2 Timothy 4:8). Life is filled with battles, but the Lord has won the war. When the good fight is finally over, we will have forever to celebrate God's victory.

Personal Challenge:

What is one battle you need to fight right now? What is one current battle you would be wise to avoid?

David Faust serves as senior associate minister with East 91st Street Christian Church in Indianapolis.

DISCOVERY

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What was the biggest challenge you faced last week?
2. What did you do last week, as empowered by God's Spirit, to share the love of Jesus with someone?

Ask three people—two readers and one reteller—to help. Ask the readers to read **1 Timothy 1:12-19** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Repeat the process for **1 Timothy 6:11-16**.

Ask the third person to summarize these passages in one minute or less.

3. What stands out to you the most in these passages?
4. Let's look more closely at some of the details:
 - How does Paul describe himself—who he was and who he had become?
 - What do you learn about Timothy?
 - How would you characterize Paul's charge to Timothy?
 - How specifically was Timothy to carry out that charge, and for how long?
5. What do you learn about God's nature from these passages?
6. What do you learn about yourself?
7. What character issues do you most need to pursue?
8. To whom will you be an example of Christ this week so this person "would believe in him and receive eternal life"?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What challenges do you anticipate this week?

For Next Week: Over the next week, read and reflect on **1 Timothy 2:1-8** as we continue studying 1 Timothy and the theme, "Build Christ's Church." You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study.

WEEK TWO

LESSON AIM: **Pray for everyone to be saved through faith in Christ Jesus.**

STUDY: 1 Timothy

THEME: Build Christ's Church

LESSON TEXT: 1 Timothy 2:8

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Acts 4:23-31; Ephesians 1:15-21; 3:14-21; 6:18-20; 1 Timothy 4:1-5

STUDY

PRAY

BY MARK SCOTT

Last week's lesson was entitled "Fight," and we do that in many ways. We fight by using bold preaching (Acts 4:19, 20, 29). We fight by destroying arguments raised against God (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). We fight by sacrifice and endurance (Revelation 2:1-3; 13:10). We fight by singing (Revelation 15:3-4). And we fight by praying.

Paul urged Timothy to stay put and slug it out against the false teachers in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3-11). Paul even added his own testimony to help Timothy endure the opposition (1:12-17). Next, Paul admonished Timothy with several congregational directives. These involved prayer, men and women in the assembly, leaders, and apostasy (1 Timothy 2:1-4:5). We understand this from a passage in the middle of these directives (3:14-15). The interrogatives—*where, when, what, who, why, and how*—can help us understand the passage.

Where and When

Where are these teachings applied? The church. (To be more accurate, the question is, "Who is being called to pray?") While many verses in 1 Timothy (and almost all of 2 Timothy) are directed at Timothy in particular, these instructions are for a wider audience. Timothy's job is to pass them on. Remember that often in the Pastoral Epistles the "you" is plural, meaning Timothy is not the only one being addressed.

When are we to begin to follow Paul's teaching? Immediately. In fact, Paul said, *first of all*. Whether Paul meant to establish a list with prayer being at the top or whether he was just emphasizing prayer as a priority, it is clear prayer must be a first concern and not a last resort. Paul urged (to beseech or encourage) prayer on us. Just as Paul "urged" Timothy to remain at Ephesus (1:3), so he urged prayer for all people.

What and Who

What is Paul urging us to do? The New Testament used four verbs for *pray* and four nouns for *prayer*. Prayers have particular nuances and purposes. They are not all alike. *Petitions* are prayers that make known specific requests, supplications, or benefits. *Prayers* is the generic term, which highlighted respectful speech to God. *Intercession* meant to entreat or interpolate with familiarity (i.e., praying for others). *Thanksgiving* is exactly what it says.

Whom do we pray for? The answer is broad and includes all people (humankind). This might be why Paul pushed his

prayer vocabulary to the limit. Christians should not be partial in their prayers. But then Paul drilled down into more specificity. Pray for *kings* (earthly potentates) and *all those in authority* (prominent leaders). Considering Nero was Rome's leader at the time this was written, it is a stunning command by the apostle Paul. On the other hand, who needed more prayer than Nero?

Why

Why do we pray? Paul gave two reasons. Christians pray for humanity in general and governmental leaders in particular. The first reason benefits believers, and the second reason benefits unbelievers. Governmental leaders do hold sway over people's lives. They pass and enforce laws, they administer justice, and they uphold the common good (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17). When Christians pray for them, their prayers have a residual benefit. Believers can lead *peaceful and quiet* (tranquil) *lives*. If the "peace of Rome" is preserved, then Christians could conduct themselves in *godliness* (a key term that appears several times in the Pastoral Epistles; it means "respect for deity") and *holiness*. There is a special beauty (good) in this. It *pleases* (makes welcome or acceptable) God.

The second reason for Christians to pray is that there is only one way to God. Great Bible doctrines are taught in 1 Timothy 2:4-6. Among those doctrines are the love of God (who wants all people to be saved), the truth of God (as revealed in the Bible), the mediation of God (which is found in Christ as the "middle person," cf. Hebrews 7:20-22), the redemption ("ransom," as in that of a slave, cf. Mark 10:45) by God, the timing of God (*proper time*), and the mission of God (i.e., Paul's place as an appointed preacher, apostle, and teacher to *the Gentiles*).

How

How are we to pray? Since Paul will continue to instruct the women in the passage that follows, he gave the men of Ephesus (and everywhere) a prayer admonition. They were to pray with no pretense (*lifting up holy hands*, cf. 1 Kings 8:22; Ezra 9:5; Psalm 28:2; Lamentations 2:19)—even the pictures in the catacombs indicate this posture. They were also to pray with no ill motive (*anger or disputing*), which will be especially important in this next section.

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APPLICATION

DOES IT REALLY HELP TO 'SEND THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS'?

BY DAVID FAUST

Prayer gets a lot of lip service, but not a lot of respect. Do you see prayer as a last resort or your first response? Many treat God the way a pilot treats his parachute: He's glad it's there for emergencies, but he hopes he never has to use it. When a basketball player heaves a long shot that has little chance of hitting the basket, announcers say, "He threw up a prayer." In football when the quarterback desperately flings a pass into the end zone as time expires, it's called a Hail Mary.

Upon hearing bad news, well-intentioned sympathizers say, "We're sending our thoughts and prayers." To many, that expression has become a lame-sounding cliché.

Taking Prayer Seriously

Are thoughts and prayers impactful? It depends on what we're thinking and to whom we're praying. In the Bible, prayer isn't bland; it's dynamic. Jesus encouraged us to ask, seek, and knock (Matthew 7:7). "Petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving" for everyone, including government officials (1 Timothy 2:1-2), are a prerequisite to cultural change and spiritual renewal. James insisted, "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (James 5:16).

Jesus prayed before common meals and uncommon miracles. He slipped away from the crowds to spend time alone with the heavenly Father (Luke 5:16). He prayed all night before calling the 12 apostles (Luke 6:12-16). Likewise, his followers prioritized prayer in their gatherings (Acts 1:14, 2:42), leadership selections (Acts 6:3-6), and strategic planning (Acts 13:1-3).

Prayer Foray

It's time for us to go on a prayer foray. *Foray* has two primary definitions: (1) To attack or invade enemy territory, as in "that foray might cost the soldiers their lives." (2) To make an initial attempt, try something new, explore an untested field of activity, or step into uncharted territory, as in "before starting her own business, she tried a short foray as an actor in the theater."

Both of these definitions apply to prayer. Through bold strategic prayer, we attack Satan's strongholds. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you" (James 4:7-8). And whether you are a new believer or have known the Lord a long time, God calls you to walk with him into new, uncharted territory. If you're ready for a prayer *foray*, why not start with these "Four A's"?

- **Admire.** "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow." Expand your appreciation for his power and glory. Admire who he is and what he has done. Magnify the Lord, because when he looks bigger, your problems look smaller.
- **Admit.** Be honest about your struggles, weaknesses, questions, doubts, sins, and shortcomings. When you're on your knees, you can't stumble, and you can't run. A humble, contrite heart says, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner."
- **Ask.** Approach God boldly and specifically. "You do not have because you do not ask God" (James 4:2).
- **Act.** Prayer isn't mere talk. Faith without works is dead. Don't just pray, "Thy will be considered" or "Thy will be discussed." Jesus said to pray, "Thy will be done."

Real impact requires more than just "sending thoughts and prayers." When we think biblically and pray earnestly, it will lead us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8).

Personal Challenge:

On a piece of paper or in your personal journal, use the "Four A's" mentioned above to write your own prayer to God.

David Faust serves as senior associate minister with East 91st Street Christian Church in Indianapolis.

DISCOVERY

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What challenge did you face last week?
2. Were you an example of Christ for anyone this past week? If so, whom, and in what ways were you an example?

Ask three people—two readers and one reteller—to help. Ask the readers to read **1 Timothy 2:1-8** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions.

Ask the third person to summarize the passage as if teaching a middle school small group about the topic.

3. What did you notice in this passage that you've never really noticed before?
4. Let's look more closely at some of the details:
 - How did Paul describe different forms of prayer?
 - Whom and what are we to pray for?
 - What can our prayers accomplish?
 - How is prayer connected to people's salvation?
 - What attitudes are involved in effective prayer?
5. What do you learn about God (and what he desires from his children) from this passage?
6. What do you learn about yourself (and your value to God)?
7. What do you learn from this passage that will help you go deeper in your prayer life?
8. For whom will you pray this week, that this person will "be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth"?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What challenges do you anticipate this week?

For Next Week: Over the next week, read and reflect on **1 Timothy 3:1-16; 5:17-22** as we continue studying 1 Timothy and the theme, "Build Christ's Church." You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study.

WEEK THREE

LESSON AIM: **Assemble leaders who follow Christ, and be such a leader.**

STUDY: 1 Timothy

THEME: Build Christ's Church

LESSON TEXT: 1 Timothy 3:1-16; 5:17-22

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Matthew 16:16-19; Mark 10:42-45; Acts 13:1-3; 1 Corinthians 11:1

STUDY

LEAD

BY MARK SCOTT

Jesus prayed all night before choosing the twelve apostles (Luke 6:12-13). The Holy Spirit selects the right leaders for the church (Acts 20:28), but prayer (last week's lesson) is the precursor for that. If Timothy was to be successful in Ephesus, he would need to pray for good leaders to assist him.

Our default setting in the Western world is to organize and categorize. We desire a neat and tidy list of qualifications for elders and deacons. Typical to Paul's Near Eastern mind-set, he had little interest in neat and tidy lists. New Testament servant leadership was less formal and more fluid than in our world. Paul seemed comfortable to discuss the character of church leaders in terms that were positive and negative, internal and external, grouped and singular, familial and corporate.

Shepherds

1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17-22

Having discussed the roles of men and women in worship (1 Timothy 2:8-15), Paul began the discussion of church leaders with yet another of the "faithful sayings." An *overseer* ("one who gives compassionate care for" and also a synonym for elder or pastor—cf. 1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4) must indicate some level of desire to serve. He must "aspire" to (reach for) it—but maybe not too much (i.e., constrained by humility). If he humbly does so, he will see that eldership is a *noble task* far more than an office.

Next, Paul built a sandwich (more technically "brackets," which scholars call "inclusio"). The *is to be* (v. 2) and the *must also* (v. 7) act like two slices of bread. Paul insisted the elder must be *above reproach* (blameless or unimpeachable) from those within the church. And, the leader must have a *good reputation* (good witness) from those outside the church. A blameless and evangelistic elder then possesses all the other qualities inside "the sandwich."

If you want to really know what an elder is like, ask about him at home. The first way an elder is above reproach is in his primary relationship (he is in a state of total fidelity with his wife). This qualification heads the list and then has two verses devoted to it later (vv. 4-5). If he cannot *manage* (stand before) his family, how can he lead the church? The elder is to be a measured person (temperate and self-controlled) who has it all together (*respectable* means that his whole world is ordered). He loves strangers (is hospitable) and can articulate the gospel (is able to teach). The elder has his passions under the con-

trol of the Holy Spirit (not laying down alongside of wine; not violent or quarrelsome, but gentle; not a materialist). Finally he is not to be a *recent convert* (neophyte). This may explain why Paul told Timothy not to lay hands on a potential elder too hastily (5:22). This level of leadership can be fertile ground for pride. So, avoiding the devil's condemnation and the *devil's trap* are paramount.

Elders who *direct the affairs of the church* (rule well—"stand before" the congregation in preaching and teaching) are to be honored in respect and remuneration. Old Testament (Deuteronomy 25:4) and New Testament (Luke 10:7) texts affirm this. Elders are to be given more than a fair shake when accused, but if they sin, they are to be rebuked publicly because of their high profile.

Servants

1 Timothy 3:8-13

Were the early deacons just ministers who served at the discretion of those over them (Acts 6:1-7; Romans 16:1-2)? Or were early deacons a recognized group of servant leaders who knew the *deep truths of the faith* and were willing to *first be tested* to assess their leadership ability? Either way, they had to meet a similar critique of their lives as did the elders (six of their qualifications overlap with those of the elders).

Deacons do not oversee the church, but they do serve the church, as Christ did (Mark 10:45). Out of all that Jesus could have been, he chose to be a deacon.

Saints

1 Timothy 3:14-16

Paul's letters substituted for his presence. Though absent, Paul wanted the saints to know how to *conduct themselves* in the church, which was God's *pillar and foundation of truth* in the world.

Elders oversee and deacons serve, but all the saints embrace the glorious confession (hymn?) in verse 16. This is a Christocentric chapter. Elders are shepherds like Jesus. Deacons are servants like Jesus. Church members are saints who believe the gospel.

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APPLICATION

WHO IS WORTHY TO LEAD?

BY DAVID FAUST

I don't measure up. That feeling stirs in my heart when I read the daunting biblical qualifications for church leaders. From one perspective, what the Lord asks of leaders isn't very different from what he asks of every Christian. Who shouldn't be gentle and hospitable? Who shouldn't avoid the love of money? But "above reproach" is a tall order. God has high expectations of church leaders, and "we who teach will be judged more strictly" (James 3:1).

Oversight of the body of Christ should never be taken lightly. First Timothy 3:1-16 compels anyone who tackles this "noble task" to ask serious questions. How "self-controlled" is good enough? How much teenage rebellion is allowed in the home of a leader who tries to "manage his own family well"? "A good reputation with outsiders" is important, but we all have our critics. Does "able to teach" mean instructing individuals one-on-one, or must an elder be a public speaker skilled in addressing large groups?

Other than Christ himself, who perfectly fulfills these requirements? Who is worthy to lead God's church?

Internal Checkpoints

One qualification for church leadership is an inner motivation to serve. No arm-twisting is required when the individual humbly but persistently "aspires to be an overseer" (1 Timothy 3:1). This aspiration not only refers to God's initial call, but also to a desire to continue serving, even during rough patches when it's tempting to give up.

Leadership requires honest self-evaluation. Neglecting this point makes us vulnerable to pride and moral failure. "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). Leaders who lack self-awareness slip into sloppy habits. They become too comfortable being in charge, too accustomed to the spotlight, too used to getting their way in meetings and being the biggest voice in the room. Leaders must check our attitudes, guard our hearts, and engage in unvarnished soul-searching. Paul wrote, "Examine yourselves . . . test yourselves" (2 Corinthians 13:5). David prayed, "Search me, God, and know my heart" (Psalm 139:23).

External Checkpoints

Wise leaders also make themselves accountable to others.

Spouse. An elder must be "faithful to his wife" (1 Timothy 3:2), and a godly spouse is a valuable sounding board, providing wise counsel.

Congregation. "Above reproach" doesn't mean perfection (a standard that would disqualify all of us), but it implies that the congregation is confident about the leaders' maturity in Christ and finds no glaring faults that would inhibit their ability to lead. Deacons "must first be tested" before they serve. Even if a formal pre-ordination process isn't required, at minimum this implies thoughtful examination by the congregation before pressing someone into service.

Other elders. First Timothy 5:17-25 pictures a healthy leadership environment marked by mutual accountability. Honor leaders who serve well. Protect them against frivolous, unfounded accusations. Confront and discipline those who sin. "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands" and rush leaders into service prematurely. And remember: We benefit not only from interacting with our own leadership teams, but also by connecting with elders and staff from other congregations for mutual instruction and encouragement.

Who is worthy to lead the Lord's church? None of us, actually. But throughout history, our gracious God has called, equipped, and empowered imperfect people who, despite their weaknesses and inadequacies, step up and give him their best.

Personal Challenge:

Do you "aspire" to serve the Lord or lead in his church? This week, how will the Lord use your spiritual gifts to advance his kingdom?

David Faust serves as senior associate minister with East 91st Street Christian Church in Indianapolis.

DISCOVERY

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What new challenge did you face last week?
2. How would you evaluate your prayer life this past week?

Ask three people—two readers and one reteller—to help. Ask the readers to read **1 Timothy 3:1-16** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Repeat the process with **1 Timothy 5:17-22**.

Ask the third person to summarize the passages as if teaching a fifth-grade Sunday school class about the topic.

3. What most stood out to you from these passages?
4. Let's look more closely at some of the details:
 - How would the application of these passages instill or restore in people confidence in their church leaders and the health of their church?
 - What church leadership principles can you draw from these passages?
 - What roles do moral character and maturity play in church leadership?
 - What connections do you see between a leader's "private life" and church leadership life?
 - Between a leader's "public life" and church leadership life?
 - What reasons do these passages provide for why qualified leaders are vital?
 - How should the church treat its leaders?
5. What do you learn about God from these passages?
6. What do you learn about his church?
7. What is at least one thing from these passages you need to obey?
8. In what specific way do these passages call you to lead well or serve well?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What challenges do you anticipate this week?

For Next Week: Over the next week, read and reflect on **1 Timothy 4:6-16** as we continue studying 1 Timothy and the theme, "Build Christ's Church." You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study.

WEEK FOUR

LESSON AIM: **Teach, by example and word, to save people.**

STUDY: 1 Timothy

THEME: Build Christ's Church

LESSON TEXT: 1 Timothy 4:6-16

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Luke 1:1-4; John 20:29-31; Acts 2:36-40; 10:34-48;
Hebrews 10:39; 13:22

STUDY

STUDY

BY MARK SCOTT

When public ministry and private life are out of sync, we call that hypocrisy. Paul called Timothy to make sure these two things were perfectly integrated. For a Christian leader, ability should not go beyond one's character. Teaching oneself is the prerequisite to teaching others (cf. Ezra 7:10).

The Navigators have accomplished much for the kingdom in helping disciple new believers. They believe that after trusting Christ, a person needs assurance of salvation. That assurance does not come by singing endless verses of "Kumbaya." It comes from receiving Christian teaching. One final way we "build God's church" is by teaching.

Point Out These Things

1 Timothy 4:6-10

Following several congregational directives (1 Timothy 2:1-4:5), Paul returned to speak more directly to Timothy about his ministry. These three paragraphs are filled with 12 imperatives. Timothy had much to model and much to teach. First, he was to *point these things out* to (place upon) the church. *These things* could refer to the previous verses (1-5) but more likely it is the substance of what follows (i.e., godliness, hope, and salvation). Timothy would be able to consistently point things out to the church provided he continued to *nourish* (train or bring up) himself on the *truths* (word) of the *faith* and the *good teaching* that he had followed.

Timothy would also succeed in pointing these things out to the church by eliminating distractions (e.g., *godless*—meaning impious—*myths and old wives' tales*). The way Timothy would remain undistracted was by training (as in working out in the gym) himself to be *godly*. Paul then made a parenthetical comment about godliness; he said it is more valuable than physical training because it has eternity written all over it. Paul ended this section with one of the five "faithful sayings" (1 Timothy 1:15; 3:1; 4:8-9; 2 Timothy 2:11; Titus 3:7-8). Paul had placed his hope in the living God, who is a *Savior*—potentially of all people and of course to those who chose to believe. Paul's example of laboring (working to the point of sweating) and striving would encourage Timothy.

Teach These Things

1 Timothy 4:11-14

While there is no substitute for Christian orthodoxy (correct beliefs), it is best undergirded with Christian orthopraxy (correct conduct or practices). Timothy's teaching would be more readily accepted by him living an exemplary life, i.e.,

a life not looked down upon (held in contempt). Timothy's *example* (from a verb meaning "to strike with a blow and to leave an impression") was to be evident in five characteristics (or two broad sweeps and three virtues): *speech* (word), *conduct*, *love*, *faith*, and *purity* (holiness).

Living above reproach would embolden Timothy's *preaching* (announcing the king's message) and *teaching* (giving formal instruction). These disciplines would come from Timothy's *public reading of Scripture* (cf. Nehemiah 8:1-10). This gave objectivity to Timothy's content. Every preacher knows which words in the sermon are the preacher's and which words are God's. But the preacher's prayer is that through all "the words" will come *the Word*.

We are not told of Timothy's specific spiritual gift or gifts, but he was told to *not neglect* it, but to fan it into flame (2 Timothy 1:6). Contextually we would assume his gifts were in the areas of preaching and teaching. Evidently these gifts came to Timothy when the *elders* laid their hands on him. This occasion might have taken place during the missionary journeys (Acts 14:19-23; 16:2-3), and it was rather typical when leaders were being set aside for some ministry tasks (Numbers 27:18-23; Deuteronomy 34:9; Acts 6:6; 8:18; 13:3; Hebrews 6:2). Living the right kind of life and being vetted by the right people credentialed Timothy to teach.

Watch These Things

1 Timothy 4:15-16

Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Proper critiquing of one's self provides a good sanity check (Psalm 139:23-24; 2 Corinthians 13:5). So, as Timothy pointed things out to the church and taught the church, he needed occasionally to look in the mirror. Being *diligent* (immersing) *in these matters* and giving oneself *wholly to them* was appropriate and good. People would notice Timothy's *progress* as a result.

Giving 110 percent in ministry can be noble, but it can also mask insecurity and pride. The only cure is to *watch your life and doctrine closely*. Life and doctrine sum up our lives. How we live and what we believe define us. Mapping one's spiritual progress and paying attention to one's doctrine will ensure salvation for ministers and their churches. The best sermons are still caught and taught.

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APPLICATION

ARE WE MAKING PROGRESS?

BY DAVID FAUST

Ronald Reagan quipped, “*Status quo* is Latin for ‘the mess we’re in.’” We won’t get out of this mess without God’s help. That’s why we need teachers who communicate God’s grace and truth with reverence and relevance.

Progress Requires Intentional Effort

Paul urged Timothy to carry out his ministry “so that everyone may see your progress” (1 Timothy 4:15). That verse compels me to ask, *Would others say I’m communicating God’s Word more effectively today than I did five years ago? Am I stuck in my ways, or am I willing to learn and grow, try new things, and keep sharpening my skills?* Abraham Lincoln wryly observed, “I walk slowly, but I never walk backward.”

In the New Testament, the Greek word for “progress” (*prokope*) appears only in 1 Timothy 4:15 and in Philipians where Paul speaks about the “advance” of the gospel and the believers’ “progress . . . in the faith” (Philipians 1:12, 25). The word described the way soldiers chopped down trees and undergrowth, clearing a path so the army could move forward. Without deliberate effort, leaders grow stale and organizations slip into mediocrity.

Progress Requires Biblical Wisdom

Bulldoze a grove of trees to build a parking lot and some will call it progress while others shake their heads in dismay. Alter longstanding traditions and some cry “foul” while others applaud the disruption. We need God’s wisdom to discern what changes truly lead to progress.

Christians should be both preservers and path makers. We have a spiritual heritage to preserve and a trail to blaze. “Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you” (2 Timothy 1:14)—that’s being a preserver. Entrusting God’s truth “to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” in the future (2 Timothy 2:2)—that’s being a path maker.

Progress Requires Incredible Patience

Someone said, “Overnight success usually takes about 10 years.” A minister friend of mine retired af-

ter serving nearly 30 years with the same church—a congregation over 160 years old. During his ministry the church increased in number, added property, built several additions onto their building, and gave more than 20 percent of their budget to missions—but progress didn’t take place instantly. It took decades as he patiently taught God’s Word, invested in relationships with the congregation, and collaborated with the elders to make wise, courageous decisions.

In his book *Good to Great*, author Jim Collins compares organizational leadership to pushing a flywheel. A period of build-up may take years as you keep pushing the heavy flywheel steadily in the same direction, but eventually there’s a breakthrough, and momentum increases once things get moving.

Progress Requires Practical Faith

Paul urged Timothy, “Watch your life and doctrine closely” (1 Timothy 4:16) because effective teaching combines “life” with “doctrine,” blending biblical knowledge and practical application. We pass along “the truths of the faith” (v. 6) not merely to transfer information but to bring about life transformation.

Following Christ is a journey of faith that keeps us stretching and growing all the way into eternity. There’s always something new to learn and do—always a next step of faith ahead.

Even death won’t end the journey. When Christians die, we move from pain-filled to pain-free, from aging to ageless, from the land of the dying to the land of the living. Now that’s progress!

Personal Challenge:

How are you sharpening your skills as a communicator of God’s Word? Will you read a book, take a course, attend a conference, participate in a webinar, critically evaluate a video of your own teaching, or ask trusted friends for honest feedback about your leadership and communication style?

David Faust serves as senior associate minister with East 91st Street Christian Church in Indianapolis.

DISCOVERY

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What was your biggest challenge last week?
2. In what specific way did you lead well or serve well this past week?

Ask three people—two readers and one reteller—to help. Ask the readers to read **1 Timothy 4:6-16** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. (Option: Use a Bible app on a phone or other device to play the audio of the passage aloud.)

Ask the third person to summarize the passages in one minute or less. Remind them to keep it simple.

3. What big-picture message was Paul communicating to Timothy?
4. As a group, go through the passage and find Paul's directives to Timothy (there are about 12) and determine:
 - Which are directed toward the development of Timothy's faith?
 - Which are directed toward Timothy regarding how specifically he was to carry out his ministry?
 - Which ones focus both on Timothy's faith and his ministry?
 - What does Paul's use of the word *devote* (v. 13) tell you about the importance of the practice of "the public reading of Scripture"?
5. How do both the personal reading, reflection, and study of God's Word and the public reading of Scripture work together to mature us in our faith?
6. What do you learn from this passage about God?
7. What do you learn about the value of godliness/character, especially for those who lead?
 - Let's take a few moments for a "progress report." How would you describe your spiritual progress over the last year? (As people share, take time as a group to encourage them in the progress you've observed.)
8. What spiritual gift do you have that you sense you might be neglecting lately? (If anyone has trouble identifying a spiritual gift, take time as a group to encourage that person by sharing a gifting you've observed in that person. Be as specific as possible. For instance, "I believe you have the gift of mercy. When I was dealing with ____, you showed me mercy in the way you ____.")
9. Pick one directive from this passage that you sense you need to start (or restart) obeying. (Pause and encourage everyone to pick one thing.) Which directive did you choose, and why?
10. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
11. What new challenge do you anticipate this week?

For Next Week: This week's lesson bring this unit of study to a conclusion. Look for additional **"1717: Your Word Is Truth"** studies, for use with your Sunday School classes, small groups, or personal studies, at ChristianStandard.com.