



TODAY IN THE **WORD**[™]

A ministry of Moody Bible Institute



from
generation
to
generation

A Study in 1 and 2 Timothy

MAY 2020

An Unlikely Leader

From the President of Moody Bible Institute

“Mentorship is not just a modern-day concept. It was an important part of the New Testament church.”



Tony attended the small church where I pastored. When I first met him he would show up on Sunday wearing a plain white T-shirt

and a metal chain around his neck. He had grown up in a gypsy family on the South Side of Chicago. The good news was that our little church was growing! The bad news was that it was hard to find people willing to serve in that tough South Side neighborhood. Who would God choose for the job? I was surprised when God drew my attention to Tony.

Tony often came to our men's fellowship on Saturday evenings. Since he had grown up in the area, he truly cared for these men. One day, Tony and his wife, Linda, began working with a woman whose husband was abusive. They gave her a ride home, only to find the husband in a fit of rage. Instead of meeting the challenge with fists, Tony spoke sternly but with compassion, "We want to help." That husband began seeing Tony for counseling, and it became clear that Tony had a God-given heart for troubled people. Tony was a solid

leadership choice—faithful, available, Spirit-filled, and teachable. At first Tony was scared, but as he continued to demonstrate calling, character, and fruitfulness, he grew in leadership. Today, Tony is a pastor that has led many people to Christ.

Mentorship is not just a modern-day concept. It was an important part of the New Testament church. The apostle Paul mentored several younger Christians, including Titus (Titus 1:4), and Timothy, whom he called his "true son in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2). Through time spent side by side in ministry, and later through letters, Paul passed down important truths, shaping the faith not just of these men but generations of God's people.

Paul compares growing in spiritual maturity to training for a sport. Just like a coach helps athletes fine-tune their natural ability, mature believers can help guide the next generation to grow in Christ. Paul writes, "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things" (1 Tim. 4:8). Paul's letters are a reminder to those of us who are mature in the faith to mentor younger believers. Do you have a heart that is open and willing to learn? Ask God to use you today! ■

Shepherds of the Church

by Dr. John Koessler

“The pastor holds a significant role as a shepherd of the church. They teach the Word and shepherd God’s people. For a pastor, competence is measured by character.”

Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus are often referred to as the “pastoral epistles” because they include guidelines for church practice and qualifications for leaders. Paul does not use the term *pastor*. In 1 Timothy 3:1–13, he speaks of overseers and deacons. In Titus 1:5–6 overseers are called elders. The term *pastor* comes from the Latin word for *shepherd*. Paul uses this term in his farewell address to the elders at Ephesus. He urges them: “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be *shepherds* of the church of God which he bought with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). Peter uses the same language urging church elders to be “shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care” (1 Peter 5:1–2).

Today’s churches often consider pastors who have great resumes. They want someone who has valuable experience. Interestingly, Paul’s qualifications in 1 Timothy and Titus primarily emphasize character. The skills he does list have to do with teaching and management. When

Paul says the church’s leaders must be “able to teach,” he means they must be knowledgeable in the faith. Titus 1:9 develops this thought in greater detail: “He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.” The emphasis is not on preaching style, but the pastor’s conviction and ability to defend the faith.

The way a leader manages relationships takes precedent over the development of church programs. The proving ground for this skill is in our family (1 Tim. 3:4; Titus 1:6). In addition to positive qualifications, the apostle also includes several negatives. Church leaders should not be bullies whose interactions are marked by violence and quarreling (1 Tim. 3:3). They should not be addicted to alcohol or consumed with greed (Titus 1:7). The pastor holds a significant role as a shepherd of the church. They teach the Word and shepherd God’s people. For a pastor, competence is measured by character. ■

For Further Study

To learn more, read *Portraits of a Pastor: The 9 Essential Roles of a Church Leader* edited by Jason K. Allen, Owen Strachan, and Donald S. Whitney (Moody).

Go Deeper

We hope these questions will help you consider (or discuss with others) what God is teaching you through this month's study of His Word. We've left a bit of room to write down your thoughts as well!

WEEK 1: Paul often refers to his story, before and after he came to Christ. If you were to share your faith story, what details would you include?

WEEK 2: Why do you think false teaching was so prevalent in Timothy's day? Do you think false teachers are present today?

WEEK 3: How would you define *godliness* from your reading of 1 and 2 Timothy? How is it different from a set of legalistic rules?

WEEK 4: Are you passing on your faith to the next generation? What are some practical ways you can do that?

TODAY IN THE WORD™

From Generation to Generation

*Fight the good fight, holding on to faith
and a good conscience.—1 Timothy 1:18–19*

When you enter Moody Bible Institute, you'll see these words carved into the stone archway: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." This encouraging and challenging Bible verse, 2 Timothy 2:15, has been Moody's motto since its founding. It also encapsulates Paul's teaching in his letters to Timothy—our study in *Today in the Word* this month.

Paul, a veteran missionary, writes to his young son in the faith, Timothy. He tackles important topics such as false doctrines and false teachers in the church, how to fight for one's faith and how to worship, the role of women and qualifications for leaders, how to make a disciple and how to be one. These topics are still relevant, and even controversial, today. As we journey through 1 and 2 Timothy, we pray this study will:

- Increase our desire to be diligent students of the Bible
- Give us strength to live a godly life, even in the midst of trying circumstances
- Help us ground all ministry in Scripture and gospel proclamation
- Keep us focused on God's calling

Thank you for your prayers and financial partnership with the ministry of Moody and *Today in the Word*. Your faithful support makes this devotional Bible study possible. ■

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The Family of God

Read 1 Timothy 1:1–2

*Listen, my son, to your father's instruction
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.—Proverbs 1:8*

When my young children have a dispute, inevitably one of them will come and ask me to resolve it. While I realize that being a good parent sometimes means letting them negotiate the conflict on their own, there are certain situations when I need to exert my parental authority in order to restore peace.

The apostle Paul cared deeply for the church in Ephesus. The city was an urban hub with a population of around 500,000, a crossroads for trade over land and sea. Paul and Timothy had planted the church and invested more than two years grounding the Ephesian believers in the Christian faith (Acts 19:9–10). Later in Paul's ministry, he heard disturbing reports of false teaching and dissension within this church. He sent Timothy as his representative to address these problems.

This is the first of two letters Paul wrote to Timothy after sending him to Ephesus. Though the letter was addressed to Timothy, Paul intended it to be read to the entire church.

This is evident from the way he ends the letter (1 Tim. 6:21). Paul begins by reminding the church that he is an “apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God” (v. 1). He points to God's calling on his life given during his Damascus Road experience (Acts 9:1–5).

Paul affirms that Timothy is “my true son in the faith” (v. 2). While Paul was not Timothy's biological father, it is likely that he had a hand in Timothy's conversion. How encouraging it would be for Timothy to hear Paul greet him this way! It would also proclaim to the church in Ephesus that Timothy was a faithful representative of the gospel preached by Paul.

► Early Christians were known for referring to one another in familial terms as brother and sister, father and son. When we come to faith in Christ, we enter a new family under the headship of the Lord Jesus. Who are the people God has used in your life as your spiritual family?

Pray with Us

As we start this month's Bible study and prayer journey, *From Generation to Generation*, we thank the Lord for the *Today in the Word* family and for the generations of believers, past and present.

Correcting with Love

Read 1 Timothy 1:3–11

The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. — 1 Timothy 1:5

In the years leading to the American Civil War, some church leaders made the grievous error of using the Bible to justify slavery. One bishop preached, “[There are] millions who have learned the way to Heaven and who have been made to know their Savior through the means of African slavery!” Using the gospel to justify slavery was not only evil but an example of false teaching.

The church in Ephesus was being influenced by a group of false teachers (v. 3). While we do not know the exact nature of their teaching, one scholar suggests it was a “form of aberrant Judaism . . . that overemphasized the law and underemphasized Christ and faith.” Paul urged Timothy to take a strong stand against their teaching. Their misuse of the Old Testament law was causing confusion and blocking God’s work (v. 4). Instead of helping the church grow in their love for God and neighbor (Matt. 22:37–40), the false teachers were engaged in “meaningless talk” (v. 6). Even worse,

they did not realize their error. They were confident in their teaching. Instead of trying to impress their listeners with their knowledge, these teachers should have had as their goal “love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (v. 5).

The Old Testament law is a wonderful gift from God (v. 8). But like any good gift, it needs to be used properly. Paul reminded Timothy that the purpose of the law was not to encourage endless speculations or show off our knowledge, but to expose people’s sinfulness and highlight their need for a Savior.

► As you study the Bible, are you growing more in your love for God and others? Or are you engaged in “meaningless talk” and immoral behavior? (vv. 6, 9–11). Understanding the Bible is not just about mastering content, but allowing God’s Spirit to transform us into the image of our Lord Jesus.

Pray with Us

Today, let’s ask the Father to help us grow in our love for Him and for each other. May we, as believers, be known by love, “which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Tim. 1:5).

Amazing Grace

Read 1 Timothy 1:12–20

*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—
of whom I am the worst.—1 Timothy 1:15*

On October 28, 1988, Shon Hopwood pled guilty to robbing several banks in Nebraska. But while he was in prison, his life was changed. He became interested in law and prepared a court petition for a fellow inmate that eventually went to the Supreme Court. He earned his law degree and helped other inmates with legal advice. Today, he is a changed man, teaching at Georgetown University and advocating for prison reform.

The apostle Paul was continually in awe that God had transformed his life. He had been a “blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man” (v. 13). When he was an enemy of Jesus, the Lord met him on the road to Damascus. He had been changed by God’s grace and brought to a place of faith in Christ (v. 14). He had gone from being a man who persecuted Christians to serving as a Christian missionary. This gave him a sense of gratitude and of hope for even the most hardened sinner. After all, if God could change him, no one was beyond reach.

Paul described his background because he wanted to encourage Timothy to go through with church discipline of Hymenaeus and Alexander (v. 20). These men were likely leaders in the church who were engaged in false teaching. Since they had “suffered shipwreck with regard to their faith,” they should be “handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme” (v. 20). The language of handing over to Satan is a reference to church discipline. But there is a note of hope in this discipline. Paul himself was once a blasphemer. If God could reach him, He could also reach Hymenaeus and Alexander. But the process would begin with confronting their false teaching.

► The stories of how the Lord has rescued us from our past sins and addictions highlight God’s power and mercy. Thank God today for what He has done in your life and look for opportunities to share your testimony with others. No one is beyond the reach of God’s grace.

Pray with Us

Following Paul’s example in today’s reading, thank God for His transforming work in your life. Praise Him for the amazing grace of His love: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15).

Pray for All People

Read 1 Timothy 2:1–7

“Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?” declares the Sovereign LORD. “Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?”—Ezekiel 18:23

Part of caring for and loving others is taking them before the throne of God. E. M. Bounds knew the importance of prayer for ministry. The 19th-century pastor once wrote, “Talking to men for God is a great thing, but talking to God for men is greater still.”

In today’s reading, Paul instructs Timothy and the Ephesian church regarding proper worship. He begins by pointing out the central importance of prayer. Of first importance was that “petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people” (v. 1). Here Paul emphasizes two points. The first is that the church in its corporate meetings should be characterized by prayer. He uses four terms to highlight different aspects of prayer, including requests, intercessions, and thanksgiving.

The second point Paul highlights is that these prayers should be for all people. Notice that he uses the inclusive word “all” six times in these seven verses. *All* kinds of prayers should be made for *all* kinds of

people. This even includes Caesar and others in governmental authority (v. 2). False teachers in Ephesus may have been teaching that prayer should be reserved for the spiritually deserving. Paul counters that view by reminding the Ephesians that God “wants all people to be saved” (v. 4). Since there is only one God, it means that He created all humanity and cares for it (v. 5). He sent Jesus who gave His life as “ransom for all people” (v. 6). It does not mean that everyone will be saved, but it does mean that the gospel message can and should be proclaimed to all. As further proof, Paul points out that he was commissioned by God as an apostle to the Gentiles (v. 7).

► Examine your prayer list. It is natural for us to spend the most time praying for those who are closest to us, our family and friends. Paul encourages us to expand our horizons and pray for “all people.” This includes government officials and believers around the world.

Pray with Us

Today’s Bible passage highlights several kinds of prayer: request, intercession, thanksgiving. Choose one of these and lift up to God the people closest to you first, then government officials, all believers, and leaders around the world.

Men, Women, and Worship

Read 1 Timothy 2:8–15

*Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray,
lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. — 1 Timothy 2:8*

In 2006, a team of researchers studied two elementary schools at recess. One had a fence around their playground, the other did not. The children from the unfenced playground stayed more packed together and closer to the teacher. The children in the fenced playground roamed the whole space, feeling free to explore. Having clear boundaries encouraged more freedom and creative play.

The Ephesian church was troubled by controversy. False teaching in the church was throwing the congregation into a state of confusion. Paul sent Timothy to bring order back to this beleaguered church. In this section of the letter (2:1–3:13), Paul was setting up boundaries for propriety in public worship. Here Paul commanded believers what to do and what not to do.

In verse 8, Paul commanded men to lift up “holy hands” in prayer. And they were to do this “without anger or disputing” (v. 8). In verse 9, Paul addressed women in the congregation. He urged them to dress

modestly, not flaunting wealth or status with their expensive clothing. They were also instructed to learn “in quietness and full submission” (v. 11). This command mirrored other instructions to men who were being disruptive (see 1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 3:11–12). Paul further commanded, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man” (v. 12). *The Moody Bible Commentary* notes that Paul was not prohibiting all teaching by women, but “the authoritative teaching of the Scriptures that is associated particularly with the office of overseer or elder.” Paul’s statement in verse 15 suggests an order established at creation.

► Paul understood that public worship worked best when boundaries were in place. We are to conduct ourselves in ways that honor God and inspire outsiders to follow Christ. For a more detailed examination of this passage, see *The Moody Bible Commentary*.

Pray with Us

Today’s Scripture shows the importance of worship, prayer, and relationships in our churches. Thank God for His instructions concerning the church life that teach us to love and respect each other “without anger or disputing” (1 Tim. 2:8).

Overseeing the Church

Read 1 Timothy 3:1–3

*Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.—Matthew 5:8*

How a company describes the type of employees they are looking for can tell you a lot about their corporate culture. One career service organization listed current buzzwords often used in job postings. Some of the most-used words include: “self-starter,” “dynamic,” “detail-oriented,” “flexible,” and even “ninja”!

In today’s reading, Paul begins to outline the qualifications for the office of overseer in the church. His list focuses primarily on the character and reputation of the office holder. The overarching quality is that the overseer should be “above reproach” (v. 2). The other eleven characteristics in these verses give a picture of what that kind of life looks like. The overseer should be “faithful to his wife” (v. 2). Paul is not focused here on whether or not an overseer had to be married, or if he could be remarried. One commentator says Paul is saying that “church leaders live exemplary married lives” if they are married.

Paul assumes that the private life of an overseer will have consequences

for the church. An overseer should therefore be temperate and self-controlled (v. 2). These qualities would rule out being controlled by alcohol or greed (v. 3). This kind of life leads others to view him with respect (v. 2). In relations with others, he is to be hospitable (v. 2). He should also be a competent teacher. In the context of heresy in the church, this assumes that the overseer is equipped to refute false teaching.

The leader and teacher of the church should be gentle and “not quarrelsome” (v. 3). This was a problem in Ephesus, where the false teachers were known for their quarrels (1:4). They should lead in a way that promotes peace and unity.

► What an overwhelming job description! All too often in the news we hear about pastors or church leaders who have succumbed to moral failure. Being a godly leader requires maturity, wisdom, and dependence upon the Spirit. Today, hold up in prayer your pastor and other church leaders.

Pray with Us

Lord Jesus, we thank you for today’s reading that shows us the qualities of a true leader! Today we support in prayer our pastors, deacons, and ministry leaders, asking for your Spirit to give them wisdom and strength for the journey.

Spiritual Maturity

Read 1 Timothy 3:4–7

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.—Luke 16:10

“Blood is thicker than water” is a well known proverb coined around a thousand years ago. It originally referred to the fact that distance, or even ocean water, cannot sever family ties of blood and kinship. It has come to mean that one should be loyal to one’s own family before any other commitments.

In today’s reading, Paul completes his list of qualifications for the office of overseer. Each is accompanied by a rationale for inclusion in the list. The first qualification is that “he manage his own family well” (v. 4). Because the church is a spiritual family, it was important that an overseer managed his own biological family in a godly manner. In the ancient world, this included not only having the respect of one’s children, but also caring for and providing for an extended family. If one could not manage a household, how could he be expected to care for a spiritual family (v. 5)?

Notice that an elder should “not be a recent convert” (v. 6). In the ancient world, most people

would see a leadership position as an opportunity for personal advancement and as a chance to raise their social standing. Paul’s warning was directed against this type of attitude. Leadership in the church looks quite different than leadership in the world. To illustrate what true leadership looks like, Jesus humbly washed His disciples’ feet (John 13:1–17). Finally, an overseer “must have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap” (v. 7). By the “devil’s trap,” Paul is referring to the fact that an overseer with a bad reputation among outsiders could bring reproach to the message of the gospel that the church is tasked to proclaim.

► These official qualifications offer us a good description of what spiritual maturity looks like for any Christian. Read through 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and consider in what areas you have grown most as a believer and what areas of your life provide opportunities for future growth.

Pray with Us

Today’s devotional encourages us to seek spiritual maturity. May we always look at Jesus and follow His example of love and humility. Lord, help us to live in a way that’s pleasing to you!

Servants and Deacons

Read 1 Timothy 3:8–13

No so with you. Instead whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. —Matthew 20:26

Greatness in God’s kingdom looks different than in the world. When the disciples gathered in the upper room to share their final meal with Jesus, He did something that shocked them. He wrapped a towel around His waist, grabbed a water basin and began to wash their dusty feet.

Jesus was teaching His disciples an important lesson: “The greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matt. 23:11). The word *servant* in that verse is the same word for “deacon” in today’s reading.

In the Greco-Roman world the role of a servant was considered undignified and unattractive. Yet, Jesus’ example had such a profound impact on the early church that one of the respected offices of church leadership was called “servant” or deacon.

Today’s reading outlines the qualifications for the role. They are strikingly similar to those for an overseer. Deacons are to control their

appetites either for alcohol or money (v. 8). They are to hold to correct doctrine (v. 9). They are to pass the test of public scrutiny (v. 10). Finally, they are to be faithful to their spouse and manage their children and home with integrity (v. 12).

Commentators debate whether or not the women mentioned in verse 11 are the wives of deacons, or female deacons. Whoever Paul had in mind, they were expected to exhibit the same kind of blameless character in their personal and private lives as those addressed in verses 8–10.

► Are you called to lead or to serve? It is human to long for positions of respect and authority, even in the church. But the very title of the office of deacon reminds us that we serve a Savior whose life was characterized by an attitude of humble service. He calls us to live with a different approach to greatness and leadership.

Pray with Us

We ask the Lord to help us live according to His teaching. We thank Christ that He left His heavenly glory and became a servant clothed in humility. Do we have the courage to humble ourselves in the same way?

The Mystery of Godliness

Read 1 Timothy 3:14–16

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

Just one day after we showed our young son how to operate a microwave, I caught him putting a bowl of macaroni and cheese into the oven with a metal spoon still in the bowl. I reacted strongly, “NO! You can’t put a spoon in the microwave!” He was taken aback and asked, “Why not?” He didn’t understand the reason behind my strong reaction.

The church in Ephesus had a number of problems. Leaders in the church were engaged in false teaching (1:3). During times of prayer people were expressing anger and hostility (2:8). Some women were dressing in ways to show off their wealth and status (2:9). In the first half of this letter, Paul gave clear instructions for these people in the church to change their behavior. But, just like my son, the church needed to understand the reasons behind these changes.

Paul explains why godly behavior is required in the church. First, the church is “God’s household”

(v. 15). The conduct of members of the household will reflect on the master of the house. How we behave demonstrates to those outside the church what God is like. Second, the church is the “church of the living God” (v. 15). In contrast to the pagan temples and idols around them in Ephesus, the church worshiped the one, true, and living God. Finally, the church is the “pillar and foundation of the truth” (v. 15). The church is to proclaim the truth of the gospel to the world. When its members are immoral or unethical, the evangelistic message of the church is compromised.

► Being a member of God’s household is a great responsibility and a great comfort. We come under His authority and protection. We have a shared identity with other believers, brothers and sisters in Christ. And, when we love, respect, and support each other, we bring credibility to the gospel we proclaim.

Pray with Us

Today’s reading reminds us that the church is “God’s household” (1 Tim. 3:15), and the way we behave either supports or compromises the gospel. Our prayer is that our godly behavior will bring credibility to the truths we proclaim.

God's Good Creation

Read 1 Timothy 4:1–5

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.—Psalm 24:1

Do you recognize false teachers in the world today? On Paul's final trip to Jerusalem, he stopped for one final meeting with the elders in Ephesus on this very topic (Acts 20:17). He warned them, "I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29–30). This prophecy came true. In today's reading Paul warns Timothy about these false teachers.

Paul reminds Timothy that he should not be surprised that false teachers infiltrated the church. In these "later times," one of Satan's most potent weapons is false teaching (v. 1). First and foremost, they are deceptive. Paul calls them "hypocritical liars" and people "whose consciences have been seared" (v. 2). But even though they are contrary to God's truth, these demonic teachings appear reasonable and compelling to many. In this

instance, false teachers were teaching that the resurrection of believers had already occurred (2 Tim. 2:18). This led them to forbid marriage and certain kinds of food.

The problem with this teaching was that it denied a central tenet of Scripture: "everything God created is good" (v. 4). Paul echoes the teaching of Jesus by declaring that all foods are clean (Luke 11:40–41). Paul advises them that food should be "received with thanksgiving" (v. 3). God has created food as a provision for us. It is a gift to be received in gratitude.

► False teachers still exist today. C. S. Lewis once wrote that Christians can fall into two opposite errors in thinking about demons. "One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive . . . interest in them." Part of growing as a Christian is understanding biblical truth which protects us from the lies of Satan.

Pray with Us

Reading about false teachers in today's Scripture passage makes us even more grateful for Moody's faculty and prompts us to pray for them fervently. Please uphold our professors in prayer as they minister to today's students.

Spiritually Fit

Read 1 Timothy 4:6–10

*For physical training is of some value,
but godliness has value for all things. — 1 Timothy 4:8*

Legendary football coach Tom Landry once described the craft of coaching in this way: “I don’t believe in team motivation. I believe in getting a team prepared so it knows it will have the necessary confidence when it steps on a field and be prepared to play a good game.” Coaches know that ninety-five percent of winning a game is about preparing well.

Like a good coach, Paul wanted to encourage Timothy to form habits that would sustain him for faithful ministry in a difficult context. In today’s reading, Paul exhorts Timothy to maintain three priorities in his life. First, to be daily in Scripture. Timothy should be “nourished on the truths of the faith and good teaching” so that he could be a “good minister” (v. 6). The metaphor of nourishment is a good one. Just as we need nutritious food on a regular and habitual basis, we should also be immersed in teaching from God’s Word on a daily basis.

Secondly, Timothy was to train himself for godliness (v. 7). This

involved avoiding and distancing himself from “godless myths” and “old wives’ tales” (v. 7). Specifically, Paul is referencing the false teaching being spread in the Ephesian church. Paul compares training in godliness to physical training. Some of us devote time to making our physical bodies more fit. Paul recognizes that this has some real value. But how much more important is training in godliness, which has value for “the present life and the life to come” (v. 8).

Finally, Paul encourages Timothy to keep his eyes on the goal. His “labor” and striving is grounded in the hope that Jesus is the Savior of all people (v. 10). Proclaiming this message faithfully is worthy of our best efforts.

► Hope is a powerful motivator. In verse 10, Paul gives insight into what motivated him to work as hard as he did for the spread of the gospel. Take a moment to reflect on what motivates you most in life? What do you labor and strive for and why?

Pray with Us

Coming to the Lord in prayer, we ask for deeper understanding of Paul’s metaphors of spiritual nourishment and training. We want to be wholehearted followers of Christ and put all “our hope in the living God” (1 Tim. 4:10).

Set a Godly Example

Read 1 Timothy 4:11–16

Watch your life and your doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. —1 Timothy 4:16

Leadership guru Ronald Heifetz once advised parents to “worry not that your child listens to you; worry most that they watch you.” Children learn by watching their parents! The apostle Paul also recognized the power of being a role model. He encouraged the Corinthians to “follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

In today’s reading, Paul applies this teaching to Timothy. He encourages him to “set an example” even though he was young (v. 12). Timothy could be a godly model both in his speech and his conduct. This covers every area of observable life which should give a clear testimony to the power of the gospel. Timothy should also be a model “in love, in faith, and in purity” (v. 12). That is, he should have a relationship with Christ that results in genuine love for others.

In addition, Timothy should set the example in his dedication to Scripture. “Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture,” Paul commands (v. 13). Unlike the false

teachers who “devoted themselves to myths and endless genealogies” (1:4), Timothy should remain grounded in God’s truth. This task was especially vital because most believers in the ancient world would not have had a copy of the Bible, so hearing it read publicly was their main access to it.

Paul recognized that Timothy had been given a spiritual gift to serve the church. By faithfully exercising that gift, Timothy could “save both [himself] and your hearers” (v. 16). Biblically, the word “salvation” can serve as a shorthand for the entire process of conversion, sanctification, and ultimate glorification. Timothy served a vital role by teaching Scripture to help people grow in their walk with Christ.

► As a parent, I have become acutely aware that my children are influenced by my example. Each of us has the opportunity to be an example of faith to those around us. Consider today the people who are watching you. How can you model godliness to them?

Pray with Us

Are you an example to somebody? You may be, without even realizing it. That’s why it’s important to follow Paul’s admonition to Timothy: “Watch your life and your doctrine closely” (1 Tim. 4:16). Lord, help us to be a godly example.

Support Those in Need

Read 1 Timothy 5:1–16

*Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD,
and he will reward them for what they have done.—Proverbs 19:17*

Imagine living in a country without Social Security, Medicare/Medicaid, or any other government program that serves as a social safety net. That is what life was like in the ancient world. Throughout the Old Testament, God had commanded His people to care for those in need (see Deut. 10:18; 14:29; 24:17; 24:19).

Today's passage takes that instruction a step further. In Paul's day, widows were among those who were especially vulnerable. Here, Paul provides guidelines for how to distribute help to widows in a way that stewarded limited resources and corrected ongoing abuses. It seems that the church in Ephesus had an official program that provided lifelong support to widows. The question was, who should qualify for that program?

Paul put the primary responsibility for the care of widows on family. If a widow has children, or grandchildren, they should be the first source of support (v. 4). Paul has strong words for those who neglect to care for their

own, "Anyone who does not provide for their relatives . . . has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (v. 8). Clearly, the gospel should impact how we treat our family.

However, if a widow does not have family, has lived a godly life, and is at the age where she is not going to remarry, she should receive this support (vv. 9–10). Paul does not command, but counsels younger widows to remarry for two reasons: (1) physical desire (see also 1 Cor. 7:8–9) and (2) the temptation to fall into idle gossip and embracing false teaching, a real problem in the Ephesian church (vv. 13–15).

► The needs around us can feel overwhelming! How do we begin to extend godly care to people in our lives? This passage encourages us not to grow weary in doing good. Consider how you can help someone you know who is in need or support an organization in your community that is providing food or services to the needy.

Pray with Us

Paul's detailed instructions on family and church life are a blessing for us! Let's heed exhortations in 1 Timothy 5 and ask God to make us the people who take good care of our poor, our widows, and our elderly.

When Leadership Fails

Read 1 Timothy 5:17–6:2

*For where two or three gather in my name,
there I am with them.—Matthew 18:20*

While the precise causes of the French Revolution are complex, one major contributing factor was the corruption and oppression of the ruling class. The backlash against the aristocracy was so severe that during the “Reign of Terror” (1793–94), over 16,000 members of the aristocracy were executed without a trial.

When leadership fails, it is often tempting to throw out the good with the bad. In Ephesus, some of the elders were responsible for the problems Timothy was facing. In today’s reading, Paul outlines a healthy way for the church to restore trust in their leadership.

Paul notes that good leaders need to be honored and supported. Elders who faithfully teach, preach, and administrate the church are worthy of financial support (v. 17). Paul grounds this teaching both in the Old Testament law (Deut. 25:4) and in the teaching of Jesus (Luke 10:7).

But what should happen when elders are wrong? Charges against an elder must be supported by two or

three people. Elders who are “sinning” should be reproved publicly (v. 20). While this may seem harsh, the entire church is impacted when leadership falls into sin. A public rebuke serves as a warning to others and helps heal the damage that has occurred (v. 20).

Because of elders who had sinned, Timothy needed to add replacements. Paul encourages him to take time to ensure the right people are selected (v. 22). He reminds Timothy that he is living “in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and elect angels” (v. 21). This should prevent him from making decisions for the sake of expediency or out of favoritism (v. 21).

► Many churches today have had the difficult experience of having a leader who has fallen into sin. Paul’s advice gives guidelines on how to deal with sin in an appropriate way. And, this is a good reminder to honor and support faithful leaders. As for us, we should speak and act as if we are living “in the sight of God” (v. 21).

Pray with Us

Paul’s teaching on leadership is a reminder to praise the Lord for godly leaders and also ask Him to cleanse the church of sin and ungodliness. May we “keep these instructions without partiality” (1 Tim. 5:21).

Questions & Answers

by Dr. Eric C. Redmond, Associate Professor of Bible

Q I'm confused. Sometimes I hear believers refer to themselves as "sinners." Aren't we now considered "saints"? Why do Christians still call themselves sinners?

A I think believers have a partner in the Apostle Paul when it comes to recognizing ourselves as sinners, for he says, "I am . . . the worst of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15–16). The Apostle John also reminds us that Jesus is our Advocate before God the Father "if anybody does sin" (1 John 2:1). The call from the Apostle Peter for us to "be holy" reflects the fact that we have sins that we must overcome—that we are sinners (1 Peter 1:16).

The father of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther, used the phrase "*simul justus et peccator*" to describe believers. Translated it means, "simultaneously righteous and sinner," or *at the same time* we are both *just* in the sight of God and *peccable* in our actions before Him. Our righteous status before God rests solely on our identity with Christ: "*in him* we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). Christ, our Advocate and Mediator, secures our salvation forever.

Presently, however, we walk before God in a relationship of daily

thoughts, intentions, motives, goals, and choices. In this relationship we fight to put off and put to death sinful ways and to reckon ourselves dead to sin in our actions (Rom. 6:11; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:5). We equally strive for holiness, seeking to put on the character of Christ (Col. 3:12–17; Heb. 12:14). We battle temptations, like fish being baited by an angler's worm on a hook but resisting (James 1:13–15; 1 John 2:15–17). Yet we remain saints because Christ has provided redemption for us.

Q What is the difference between being baptized and receiving the Holy Spirit (as stated in Acts 8:16)?

A In Acts, Luke speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit in terms of *baptism*, *filling*, and *receiving*. These terms overlap in their experiences while retaining different meanings. When the believers gathered in Jerusalem on Pentecost, they experienced the Spirit of God. The writer describes this as being *filled* (Acts 2:4). Yet, when Jesus commanded them to go to Jerusalem, he told them that they were to "wait for the gift [his] Father promised," which was to be "*baptized* with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:4–5).

“We look forward to the day in which we will enjoy humanity to the fullest, in the presence of God and without the presence of sin.”

When the promise was fulfilled in Acts 2, we believe this baptism and filling occurred simultaneously. The believers were *baptized* (or immersed) fully in the Spirit of God and united to Christ *eternally* (see also 1 Cor. 12:12–13). At the same time, the believers were *filled* with the Spirit and empowered to do the work of Christ in the grace of His strength. In John 20:22 we learn that this special event united and empowered the disciples until Pentecost.

The Apostle Paul, an unbeliever at Pentecost, experienced baptism and filling of the Spirit simultaneously (Acts 9:17). Those baptized in the Spirit *once* were filled *repeatedly* by the Spirit to do the work of God (Acts 4:8, 31; 13:9, 52). The word *receive* is seen in Acts 8 when Luke described the baptizing work as something one receives from God. In Acts 10 and 11 he describes the baptizing work as something that is poured out from God in heaven and falls onto believers (10:44–45; 11:15, 16).

Q Will everyone receive a new body when they die or just believers?

A Believers have a sure hope that our bodies will be raised from the dead—that we will be

clothed with “the imperishable” and “immortality” (1 Cor. 15:54). We look forward to the day in which we will enjoy humanity to the fullest, in the presence of God and without the presence of sin. In new, sinless, glorified bodies we will celebrate this joy forever!

Scripture also describes people in eternal judgment experiencing bodily punishment. Jesus spoke of dealing with lust so that one’s “whole body” would not be thrown into hell (Matt. 5:29–30). In Revelation 20:13, “the sea gave up the dead that were in it,” the sea houses bodies, not souls. Unbelievers who perished at sea will be raised physically and receive judgment.

The true substance of these eternal bodies is unknown to us. We only know that believers will gain completely righteous bodies and will be able to stand in the presence of God and know Him in His fullness (1 Cor. 13:12). Unbelievers will undergo the torment of the wrath of God in an eternal form of a sinful body. This should motivate us with zeal, boldness, courage, and love to have conversations with our unsaved loved ones, friends, neighbors, and coworkers, explaining the gospel with clarity and urgency. ■

The Joy of Contentment

Read 1 Timothy 6:3–10

*But godliness with contentment
is great gain.—1 Timothy 6:6*

How many minutes have gone by since you saw your last advertisement? These appeals have become so much a part of our life that we barely notice them. They appear on television, our phones, and our emails, encouraging us to buy more than we can afford. How can we practice the joy of contentment?

In today's reading, Paul gives some final warning against false teachers. These people, who do not "agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ," are arrogant, ignorant, and create controversy resulting in "envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between people" (vv. 3–4). But even worse, these false teachers had a false view of wealth and money.

Paul encourages Christians to view wealth differently. We must recognize that godliness does not lead to financial gain, but to contentment (v. 6). Paul reminds us that "we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it" (v. 7).

In other words, material wealth does not have eternal value. This raises the question for a Christian: How much is enough?

Paul's standard for contentment was pretty low: food and clothing (v. 8). It is likely that Paul looked to Jesus as his model (Matt. 6:25–34). Paul was not saying that every Christian should only have the bare minimum. What he was saying is that wealth beyond the basic necessities does not lead to more contentment. In fact, a desire for wealth can lead to a ruined life (v. 9). There is a real danger in the pursuit of more. Paul closes this section with the warning that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (v. 10). It can lead us down a road that ends in "many griefs" (v. 10).

► Christians are not immune to pursuing a life motivated by greed. Take a moment and evaluate your own life. What is your attitude toward money and wealth? What are you living for? How can you learn to be content with what you have?

Pray with Us

Lord, show us what true contentment looks like and how to be content with what we have. Make us a generous people and keep us from pursuing a life motivated by greed.

Fight the Good Fight

Read 1 Timothy 6:11–16

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.—1 Timothy 6:11

“In the sight of God and these witnesses, I now pronounce you husband and wife!” These words often spoken at the end of a marriage ceremony communicate an important idea. The couple has publicly proclaimed that they will live in a lifelong covenant relationship with one another. When times get difficult, they remember the vows they made before God and their friends and family as an encouragement to faithfulness.

As Paul draws his first letter to a close, he reminds Timothy of a similar commitment he made before God and others. At his baptism, Timothy made a public confession of faith in Christ (v. 12). He also carried out his ministry “in the sight of God . . . and of Christ Jesus” (v. 13). Not only was Jesus a witness to Timothy’s ministry, He provided the model for it. Even in the most difficult circumstances, Jesus remained faithful “while testifying before Pontius Pilate” (v. 13). If Jesus was faithful, even with the imminent

threat of crucifixion, Timothy could persevere as well. Additionally, Timothy was encouraged to persevere by looking to the future. One day, Jesus will return in triumph and glory (v. 14). This return is guaranteed by the promise of God (v. 15).

It is a mark of how difficult Timothy’s circumstances must have been that Paul felt it necessary to provide him with all these reasons to pursue “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness” and to “fight the good fight of the faith (vv. 11–12). Perseverance in ministry can be difficult. Paul understood that we often need to be reminded of who God is, what He has done, and what our future holds to maintain the perspective we need for faithfulness.

► Are you losing your eternal perspective? Are there difficulties in your life or ministry that you are facing? We must never forget that we serve and worship a God who is in control. In Him, our future is secure.

Pray with Us

As Moody graduates celebrate Commencement, we pray over them the words from today’s reading: “[P]ursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness . . . Fight the good fight of the faith” (1 Tim. 6:11).

Live Generously

Read 1 Timothy 6:17–21

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. —Matthew 6:19

Do you suffer from *affluenza*? Social scientists coined this term for our modern-day relationship with money and wealth. They define it as “a painful, contagious, socially transmitted condition of overload, debt, anxiety, and waste resulting from the dogged pursuit of more.”

Paul had already warned Timothy about the danger of a love of money (6:10). Now, at the end of this letter, he addresses a question his previous teaching may have raised. What about people who are already rich? What should they do with their wealth? Paul gives three commands that address this question. First, he warns the rich “not to be arrogant” (v. 17). Wealth can lead to a puffed-up sense of security and importance. The world looks up to and respects the wealthy, a respect they can easily believe that they deserve. Second, Paul encourages the rich to put their hope in God, not in their wealth. In contrast to our faith in God, wealth

is uncertain (v. 17). It can be here today and gone tomorrow, while God generously provides us with what we need (v. 17). Finally, Paul urges the rich to be generous and to use their wealth to “lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age” (v. 19). We should invest in ministry that has eternal value. Wealth is not to be rejected, but should be viewed from the proper perspective. As a good gift from God, it should be used to honor Him, not replace Him.

Paul ends the letter rather abruptly by giving Timothy a final encouragement not to be influenced by false teaching, but to guard the gospel, which has been entrusted to him (v. 20).

► Think about your own “money story.” How do you relate to money? How do you use your money to glorify God? In this world, enmeshed in materialism, we should regularly evaluate our own giving practices and our personal relationship with wealth.

Pray with Us

Praise the Lord for the truths we have learned so far this month. May these truths and the lessons we learned shape our lives and relationships at home, in the church, and at the workplace.

Final Words

Read 2 Timothy 1:1–5

I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. —2 Timothy 1:5

A person's last recorded words can be fascinating because they give a window into what people truly believe. The philosopher Karl Marx is purported to have ended his life by saying, "Last words are for fools who haven't said enough." Theoretical physicist Richard Feynman's final statement was, "I'd hate to die twice. It's so boring." While composer Ludwig van Beethoven declared, "I will hear in heaven."

The book of 2 Timothy records Paul's final words in Scripture. Some time had passed since he wrote 1 Timothy. Most scholars believe that Paul wrote 2 Timothy during his final imprisonment in Rome not recorded in the book of Acts. Church tradition indicates that Paul was arrested under the emperor Nero and was beheaded by him in AD 67.

It is clear throughout this letter that Paul sensed his death was near. This realization lends a gravity to his message. He opens by declaring that he is an apostle of "Christ Jesus . . . in keeping with the promise of life that

is in Christ Jesus" (v. 1). Throughout the letter, Paul encourages the next generation, and specifically Timothy, to remain steadfast in his commitment to the gospel. The deeply personal tone of the letter is seen in these opening verses. Paul remembers a poignant episode with Timothy, "recalling your tears, I long to see you" (v. 4). We do not know what event Paul is referring to, but it is a reminder of how close these two men were. Paul affirms Timothy's "sincere faith," which he inherited from his faithful grandmother and mother. Timothy's conversion was not a cataclysmic event like Paul's on the Damascus Road, but it was nevertheless a genuine faith that he had embraced as a young man.

► Paul's mention of Lois and Eunice by name highlights the importance of passing down our faith to the next generation. Who first shared the gospel with you? Consider the "Timothys" in your life, those who are your children in the faith.

Pray with Us

As we begin our study of 2 Timothy today, will you pray for the "Timothys" in your life? If you don't have any, ask the Lord if He wants you to start discipling believers who are young in the faith.

Not Ashamed

Read 2 Timothy 1:6–12

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.—Romans 1:16

Men and women face numerous challenges after the release from prison. One of the biggest challenges is finding employment. Most job applications ask if the applicant has ever been convicted of a crime. Many employers avoid hiring people with a criminal past. As of 2018, the ex-convict unemployment rate was twenty-seven percent, higher than during the Great Depression.

In Paul's world, there was an even greater stigma for prisoners. The ancient world had a highly developed code of honor and shame that governed most relationships. Paul's imprisonment would impact not only him but also all those associated with him. In today's reading, Paul encourages Timothy to "not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me as his prisoner" (v. 8).

Rather than being ashamed of his imprisonment, Paul encourages Timothy to "join with me in suffering for the gospel" (v. 8). Paul recognizes that God saved us not just for our own benefit, but because He has a purpose

for our life (v. 9). The Lord Jesus defeated death and called Paul and Timothy to herald the good news that all people can be forgiven and find new life in Christ because of His work on the cross (vv. 10–11).

Paul recognizes that Christ's call on his life could lead to suffering. Yet, he is not discouraged because he is convinced that when Christ returns, his suffering would be vindicated (v. 12). All of this provides Timothy with a good reason "to fan into flame the gift of God" (v. 6). He should continue in the work God had called and equipped him for by His Spirit. Through Him, he would find the "power, love and self-discipline" needed to faithfully live out his calling (v. 7).

► In a culture often hostile to the Christian faith, it can be easy to get discouraged. We need Paul's reminder to "not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord" (v. 8). God has called us to join in His work and gives us hope of His imminent return!

Pray with Us

Lord, thank you for the hope of your imminent return and for the joy of walking with you! We pray against discouragement in this often hostile environment. The truth of your Word helps us live worthy of your calling.

Guard the Gospel

Read 2 Timothy 1:13–18

Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.—2 Timothy 1:14

In the early days of the Civil War, Private William Scott of the Union Army was assigned to keep watch at an important bridge guarding the way to the Capitol. Around 2 a.m., an officer found him asleep at his post. The penalty? Death. But when Scott faced the firing squad, he received a last-minute pardon from President Lincoln with a warning about how important it was to remain vigilant.

In today's reading, the apostle Paul concludes his charge to Timothy with a command to "guard the deposit that was entrusted to you" (v. 14). Paul admonished Timothy to be vigilant in teaching and preaching the gospel that he had received (v. 13). His teaching should be marked by a life that has been transformed by the message—"with faith and love in Christ Jesus" (v. 13). This kind of life is only possible "with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us" (v. 14).

In order to drive his point home, Paul provided Timothy with two

examples. He reminded Timothy of Phygelus and Hermogenes who abandoned Paul and the gospel. We do not know many details about this situation, but the consequences were severe. Paul declared that "everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me" because of their unfaithfulness (v. 15).

In contrast, Onesiphorus displayed courageous faithfulness. In many countries today, identifying as a Christian can be costly. When Paul was arrested by Nero, Onesiphorus had regularly sought him out to bring him refreshment and support. He identified himself with a condemned leader of the church. He was a great help to the church in Ephesus (v. 18).

► What does it mean for you to be "not ashamed" of the gospel? While you may not face imprisonment for your faith in Christ, you may be quiet about your faith fearing ridicule from friends or family members. Like Timothy, we can use this reminder to be bold in our convictions.

Pray with Us

What a wonderful example Paul gives us when he describes the faithfulness of Onesiphorus! As we reflect on 2 Timothy 1, ask God to teach you how to make disciples and how to be a faithful disciple.

Stay the Course

Read 2 Timothy 2:1–7

*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction,
faithful in prayer.—Romans 12:12*

In 2011, Rob Sloan was accused of cheating and asked to return his bronze medal for the Kielder Marathon. While he appeared to finish in third place, a witness accused the runner of leaving the race, taking a bus to the finish line, and then re-entering the course near the end. While Sloan denied the accusation, it cast doubt on his success and his character.

In today's reading, Paul advises Timothy: "Don't take shortcuts in ministry!" He encourages Timothy to do the hard work of mentoring and training leaders, so they could, in turn, train others. This kind of hands-on mentoring can be time consuming and challenging, especially when false teachers are trying to influence people as well. But there are no shortcuts for this kind of work.

Paul then gives Timothy an unlikely invitation: to "join with me in suffering" (v. 3). The New Testament does not promise that being a Christian will make life easy. In fact, the opposite is true. Jesus warned His disciples, "Remember what I told you

... if they persecuted me, they will persecute you also" (John 15:20). Paul understood this dynamic well. He also knew his suffering was not in vain and wanted to inform Timothy of what to expect.

To help Timothy think through this teaching, Paul uses three analogies. First, a soldier does not get distracted by the crowds. Instead, he single-mindedly works to please his commanding officer (v. 4). Similarly, an athlete endures grueling training in order to receive the prize. Finally, a farmer works diligently in order to receive the benefit of crops (v. 6). Paul's point? Timothy's suffering and work was not in vain, but focused on the certain hope of God's approval.

► Are you struggling to stay the course? Sometimes we simply need the reminder to keep our eyes on the end goal. Charles Spurgeon once quipped, "By perseverance the snail reached the ark." While not glamorous, faithfulness in ministry is a key to success.

Pray with Us

Our reading today celebrates steadfastness in faith and in ministry. Let's ask the Lord to give us insight into the three analogies Paul is using: a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer.

Remember Jesus Christ!

Read 2 Timothy 2:8–13

*If we died with him;
we will also live with him.—2 Timothy 2:11*

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Bolshevik party's aim was to impose atheism on the country. Party leader Nikolai Bukharin was sent to Kiev to speak to a huge crowd, presenting argument after argument for atheism. At the end of his speech Bukharin turned to a local leader to dismiss the crowd. This local leader happened to be the parish priest who concluded by saying, "Christ is Risen!" And with one voice, the crowd thundered back, "He is Risen Indeed!"

In the face of a hostile government outside the church and false teachers inside, Paul exhorts Timothy to "[r]emember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David" (v. 8). In the Old Testament, God had promised to raise up a descendant from David, son of Jesse, who would reign forever (Isa. 11:1–2). Paul encouraged Timothy to remember that God had kept His promise in Jesus, whom He vindicated by raising Him from the dead. Timothy had grounds for hope even in the face of suffering.

Paul rejoiced that even though he was in chains for preaching the gospel, "God's word is not chained" (v. 9). The gospel can prosper and flourish even when its messengers are persecuted. Ironically, at times that persecution opens new avenues for the gospel to penetrate. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul rejoiced because his imprisonment had "served to advance the gospel" (Phil. 1:12). Paul concludes by reciting part of a baptismal hymn, celebrating our union with Christ in His death and resurrection (v. 11). Our union with Christ means that we might suffer as He did. However, through Him, we can be certain of a future resurrection. We can persevere in the faith, knowing that God will be faithful in all things (v. 13).

► Paul's command to "[r]emember Jesus Christ" applies to you and me as well (v. 8). Every day we are immersed in a culture that assumes this life is all there is and that our faith in Christ is irrelevant. During difficult times, we must remember Jesus Christ!

Pray with Us

"Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David" (2 Tim. 2:8). Paul's words to Timothy certainly apply to us as well, teaching us how to live in the light of Christ. Praise God for His eternal Word!

An Approved Worker

Read 2 Timothy 2:14–21

*I am the good shepherd;
I know my sheep and my sheep know me.—John 10:14*

My son, who is in the fifth grade, just graduated from his school's D.A.R.E. program (Drug Abuse Resistance Education). This is a police-led program designed to prevent kids from using or abusing drugs and alcohol by describing the physical, social, and mental consequences.

In today's reading, Paul vividly describes the consequences of having false teachers in the church. Their "quarreling about words" was not just distracting but also destructive. It "ruins those who listen" (v. 14), makes those who engage in it "more and more ungodly" (v. 16), and causes the church to be unhealthy (v. 17). Paul names two ringleaders who were causing much of the damage, Hymenaeus and Philetus (v. 17). They had been teaching that the final resurrection had already happened (v. 18). By doing this, they were denying the future physical resurrection of believers and undermining the faith.

In contrast, Paul paints a picture of what a faithful minister of the gospel looks like. Instead of looking

for the approval of people, the faithful minister will seek the approval of God (v. 15). Instead of quarreling about words, he "correctly handles the word of truth" (v. 15). Because of this, he can appear before God unashamed (v. 15).

Despite the damage done by false teachers, God promises to protect and preserve His church (v. 19). In the ancient world a seal was used to indicate ownership. Paul reminds Timothy that God has sealed us with the inscription, "the Lord knows those who are his" (v. 19). God is not confused by false teachers, and He knows His true children intimately. These are the ones who confess the name of the Lord and turn away from ungodliness (v. 19).

► It is easy to look at the state of the church today and worry about its survival. Remember that despite persecution, false teaching, and internal conflict, the church has endured for almost 2,000 years! God promises that a "solid foundation stands firm" (v. 19).

Pray with Us

Paul's description of false teachers in the church is a sobering reminder for us today to pray for our churches, pastors, Bible teachers, and ministry leaders. But be encouraged that "God's solid foundation stands firm" (2 Tim. 2:19).

Pursue Peace

Read 2 Timothy 2:22–26

Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace.—2 Timothy 2:22

Most people wish the world could be a more peaceful place, but few know how to achieve that goal. For the Christian, peace is not an abstract concept. It's linked to our relationship with Jesus Christ. Only through Him can we experience true peace.

Seeing that Timothy was at the center of church conflict, Paul urged him to take a different path. He instructs Timothy to “flee the evil desires of youth” (v. 22). When a young person is confronted by someone who disagrees with them, or who attacks them, the natural response is to fight back. It is easy to take things personally and become embroiled in argument. Paul counsels Timothy not to “have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments” and not to be “resentful” in the face of opposition (vv. 23–24).

Instead, Timothy is to “pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace” (v. 22). He is to “be kind to everyone” (v. 24). Instead of taking attacks personally and lashing out,

“opponents must be gently instructed” (v. 25). His primary desire should be for the soul of those he is confronting. His prayer should be that “God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth” (v. 25). The situation was too serious to let ego get in the way. These opponents were in danger of being entrapped by the evil one (v. 26). In order to keep this perspective, Timothy should remember that he is the “Lord’s servant” (v. 24). He should not be concerned with justifying himself but with representing the Lord well in the midst of this conflict. He serves a God who “wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).

► Pursuing peace means wanting what is truly best for the other person. Perhaps there is someone in your life about whom you need to change your perspective. Consider, what would God want most for that person? How can you pray or work toward that end?

Pray with Us

Lord, show us how to “pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace” (2 Tim. 2:22) in all circumstances and with all people, being “kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful” (v. 24).

Signs of the Times

Read 2 Timothy 3:1–9

The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne. He observes everyone on earth; his eyes examine them.—Psalm 11:4

In *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens describes the main character in this way, “Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!” This long list of colorful adjectives helps us understand what type of character Scrooge was.

In today’s reading Paul uses eighteen adjectives to describe life in the “last days” (v. 1). For Paul, the “last days” refers to the whole span of church history from the resurrection of Jesus to the Second Coming. These characteristics were true of the false teachers who had been damaging the church. Paul warned Timothy and encouraged him to live in a different way. These people were utterly self-centered. They claimed to know how to be truly godly, but instead were deceptive and destructive. Timothy would do well to “have nothing to do with such people” (v. 5).

These false teachers would “worm their way” into the homes of gullible

women (v. 6). These women were likely widows who had considerable resources at their disposal to support the ministry of the false teachers. Paul compares these false teachers to Jannes and Jambres. These are the traditional names of the Egyptian magicians who copied some of the miracles Moses performed in front of Pharaoh (Ex. 7:11). In the same way, these false teachers closely imitated true apostles and teachers. While they might have looked the same on the outside, their message and their lives would lead to destruction. Paul encouraged Timothy that, in the end, “their folly will be clear to everyone” (v. 9). He closes on a note of hope. No matter how dark those “last days” get, we know that the Lord wins!

► The list of eighteen descriptions can be a helpful checklist by which to measure our own lives (vv. 2–4). Read slowly through this list and ask the Lord if there are areas you need to confess about and ask for God’s help to change.

Pray with Us

In view of Paul’s description of the “terrible times in the last days” (2 Tim. 3:1), ask the Holy Spirit today to help us examine our own lives and behaviors and reveal to us the areas that need to change.

Suffering for Godliness

Read 2 Timothy 3:10–13

For Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.—2 Corinthians 12:10

On his first missionary journey, Paul stopped at Lystra, a rural outpost in modern-day Turkey (Acts 14:8–20). Arriving in the city, he encountered a man who had been lame from birth. The Lord used him to heal this man, and this healing amazed the whole town. Paul and Barnabas had the chance to share the gospel with many who had never heard before. But, just when it looked like there was an open door for ministry, opponents arrived in the city and “stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city” (Acts. 14:19). Left for dead, Paul fled the next day.

Paul knew that being a faithful Christian did not mean victory after victory. In addition to seeing God work powerfully to change hearts and lives, he experienced beatings, harassment by the government, and trials of every kind. Writing from a Roman prison where he faced his impending death, Paul reminded Timothy of his experiences in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (v. 11). At each place he encountered fierce opposition.

Following Christ wasn't going to get easier. Paul states bluntly, “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (v. 12). We live in a fallen world full of sinful and broken people (v. 13). Of course, these are the very people who need to hear the message of the gospel. But we should not be surprised when that message sparks hostility. Paul encouraged Timothy to meet these trials, as he did, with “faith, patience, love” and most of all “endurance” (v. 10). Paul could look back and see how the “Lord rescued me from all of them” (v. 11). Paul didn't mean that the Lord kept him from persecution, he was saying that the Lord had given him the power to faithfully endure.

► When we pursue a faithful life we should expect opposition of some kind. Are we willing to endure insults, slights, or the condescension of others? The 20th-century martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us, “Suffering . . . is the badge of true discipleship.”

Pray with Us

Thank the Lord in prayer for Paul's example of perseverance in faith, patience, endurance, and willingness to suffer for Christ. Do we have faith and courage to follow this example?

Built on the Word

Read 2 Timothy 3:14–17

All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.—2 Timothy 3:16

On the first day of training camp in 1961, the Green Bay Packers started a new season. The previous year, they had lost a heartbreaking championship game. Their coach, Vince Lombardi, gathered the weary team around him. “Gentlemen,” he said, holding a football high in the air . . . “This is a football.” Lombardi took the team back to the fundamentals of the game.

Paul had been warning Timothy about the trials he was sure to face in ministry. “Everyone,” he said, “who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (3:12). How should Timothy prepare for these difficulties? By going back to the fundamentals. Paul encouraged Timothy to “continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of” (v. 14). Most of all, he should rely on Scripture in all aspects of ministry (v. 15).

In verses 16–17 Paul clearly describes the nature and function of Scripture. “All Scripture,” Paul declares, “is God-breathed” (v. 16).

Paul here refers specifically to the Old Testament, as the New Testament was in the process of being written. Paul clarifies that the Bible is not just a wonderful collection of human wisdom, but it has its source in God Himself. The word “God-breathed” is one Paul coined. The image comes from breathing, as God exhaled His Word. This image does not negate human involvement in the process, but it affirms that God is fully responsible for Scripture.

Scripture was given by God not to satisfy our curiosity or give us special, insider information. Scripture “is useful” for all aspects of ministry (v. 16). It is a gift God has given to equip us for the work He has called us to do (v. 17).

► The Bible is a wonderful gift! We have “God-breathed” words to read, to meditate upon, and to guide our lives. Be sure to thank the Lord for the perfect gift of His Word. Reflect on how you can share this wonderful gift with others.

Pray with Us

Paul instructs Timothy on how to persevere in the faith and the importance of Scripture. Let’s pray that we would accept this charge as ours, to be “thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:17).

Preach the Word

Read 2 Timothy 4:1–5

Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season.—2 Timothy 4:1

Exercise has many benefits, including controlling our weight, preventing diseases, improving our mood, increasing energy, and helping us get a good night's sleep. Even so, we neglect it. One reason? We don't stay focused on long-term goals. When we don't see an immediate payoff, we often stop trying.

In today's reading, Paul recognizes a similar danger for Christians. We know that one day Jesus will return and judge the living and the dead. But we cannot see Jesus now, so we lose focus. In light of this, Paul encourages Timothy to keep Christ's return clearly in mind (v. 1). We must also recognize that He is present with us now. Paul begins his final charge to Timothy reminding him of this important reality: "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge" (v. 1).

This solemn opening serves as

a preamble to Paul's primary charge to "preach the word" (v. 2). Timothy should faithfully teach Scripture at every opportunity, "in season and out of season" (v. 2). "For the time will come," Paul warns, "when people will not put up with sound doctrine" (v. 3). Timothy needed to stay grounded in Scripture, because the people around him would want a different message (vv. 3–4). Timothy should remember that he will be judged by God one day, not by them. Timothy's calling was to "endure hardship" (v. 5), teaching his congregation "with great patience and careful instruction" (v. 2).

► The hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" expresses our longing for Christ's return. "O Come, Thou King of nations bring / an end to all our suffering / Bid every pain and sorrow cease / and reign now as our Prince of Peace / Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel / Shall come again with us to dwell." Reflect on these lyrics as a reminder of Christ's return.

Pray with Us

As we are coming to the end of our Bible study, review the Scripture lessons we've learned. How were you encouraged by the books of 1 and 2 Timothy? Was there anything new and unexpected the Lord revealed to you?

Heavenly Reward

Read 2 Timothy 4:6–8

Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.—Revelation 2:10

Bonnie Ware spent years caring for patients in the last weeks of their lives. The nurse wrote a blog post titled “The Top Five Regrets of the Dying,” which went viral and was later turned into a book. Among those regrets were: “I wish I had the courage to live a life true to myself” and “I wish I hadn’t worked so hard.”

In today’s reading, the apostle Paul realized the end of his life was near. But instead of reflecting upon regrets, he faced his death with confidence and hope. This hope was grounded in three truths. First, he described his impending death this way: “I am already being poured out like a drink offering” (v. 6). He knew his suffering and death had purpose. He compared his suffering to a “drink offering,” which was a type of sacrifice described in the Pentateuch (Num. 15:5). The Lord received his suffering as an act of worship.

Second, Paul was confident that he had lived his life well. The Lord

had called him to be an apostle to the Gentiles and to suffer for his witness (Acts 9:15–16). Paul declared, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (v. 7). Like a marathon runner crossing the finish line, he had done his part.

Finally, Paul knew this life is not all there is. He could look forward to standing before the Lord justified because of what Christ had done. He proclaimed, “There is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day” (v. 8). Unlike an Olympic race where only one winner can be crowned, at the final judgment the victor’s crown can go to any one “who have longed for his appearing” (v. 8).

► Some people make a list of things they want to experience before they die. What is on your spiritual bucket list? Are there ways your life needs to change so you can look back on it and say with Paul, “I have kept the faith”?

Pray with Us

Having read Paul’s inspiring words, as he sums up his life, we pray that we would live in such a way that, like Paul, we will say at the end: “I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7). Amen!

God Is Faithful

Read 2 Timothy 4:9–18

The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.—2 Timothy 4:18

Pastor Richard Wurmbbrand was imprisoned for 14 years in Romania for his faith in Christ. He was eventually ransomed and immigrated to America. Upon arriving, he founded a ministry called Voice of the Martyrs. The purpose was not only to raise awareness about Christians around the world who were persecuted but also to encourage and help those who were suffering. He wanted them to know they were not alone.

In today's reading, Paul urges Timothy to "do your best to come to me quickly" (v. 9). One reason is that Paul is feeling isolated and alone. Many of his associates had left him for various reasons. Crescens and Titus were both traveling for ministry purposes (v. 10). Demas, who had once been a close ministry partner of Paul's, abandoned him "because he loved this world" (v. 10).

Paul asked Timothy to bring Mark (v. 11). This is the same Mark whom Paul did not want to bring on his

second missionary journey because he had previously abandoned them (Acts 15:36–40). We do not know the whole story, but Mark had been rehabilitated in Paul's eyes. He was now "helpful to me in my ministry" (v. 11).

In spite of his feeling of isolation, Paul knew he was not really alone. At his first defense, "the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength" (v. 16). Paul's ultimate desire in his trial was not his acquittal, but that "through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it" (v. 17). To the very end, Paul had a clear-eyed focus on his mission to proclaim Jesus as Lord.

► It is possible to feel isolated as a Christian even if we are not in prison for the faith. When we are in that situation, we can follow Paul's example. He asked for help. He understood that he needed fellowship. He also reminded himself that God was present with him at all times. He was not alone.

Pray with Us

Today's Scripture shows us the heartbreak of isolation and the importance of community. Praise God for the people around you, your church, your work community, and your friends. Ask Him to be with you in times of loneliness.

From Generation to Generation

Read 2 Timothy 4:19–22

*Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God,
till I declare your power to the next generation,
your mighty acts to all who are to come.—Psalm 71:18*

It is difficult to see your children struggle. Paul looked upon Timothy as his spiritual son. He knew Timothy faced opposition and discouragement. As one of his last acts, he sent the younger leader these letters to encourage and equip him to face the task. Paul understood that the future of the church depended upon the next generation. He desired to pass on his wisdom and experience.

As we reflect on these two letters, three major themes stand out. The first is that salvation is both our present reality and our future hope. Jesus has already achieved everything we need for the forgiveness of sins (1 Tim. 1:15–16; 2 Tim. 1:9–10). There is nothing we can add to what Christ has done (1 Tim. 2:5–6). However, the full implementation of Jesus’ victory over sin and Satan remains a future hope. The present is described as “the last days,” which are times of difficulty and strife (2 Tim. 3:1). Thus, Timothy (and we) should not be surprised if ministry involves suffering (2 Tim. 3:12). Even

so, we have a glorious, future hope to anticipate. One day, Jesus will return and that hope should inspire and encourage us to persevere (1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1).

Until Christ returns, the church has an important mission to accomplish. Most of the teaching about qualifications for church leaders, the role of men and women in church, and how to organize worship is designed to help the church be more effective in fulfilling its mission of proclaiming the gospel.

Finally, the gospel should transform our lives, so that we live as a new creation! The key word for this change is “godliness” (1 Tim. 4:8). It is this transformed life that authenticates the gospel message.

► When we get discouraged, we should look back at what Christ has done, look forward to His return, and look around us to see changed lives. Praise God for who He is, for what He is doing, and for His imminent return.

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayer journey this month, we thank the Lord for the treasure of His Word. We praise the Father for His faithfulness to all generations. And we thank the *Today in the Word* family for studying the Bible and praying with us!



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2 TIMOTHY 3:16

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