



THRU the **BIBLE**

with *J. Vernon McGee*

1 TIMOTHY

BIBLE COMPANION



EPISTLES

READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of the book of 1 Timothy heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



Begin with prayer. Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



As you study, read the Bible passage first. Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to TTB.org/1Timothy (or any book of the Bible). The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion. Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING....

COLOSSIANS 3:16^A

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LESSON 1

WHAT THE CHURCH IS FOR



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Timothy Introduction–1**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Timothy](https://www.TTB.org/1Timothy) to *1 Timothy Introduction*,
1 Timothy 1:1-2, *1 Timothy 1:3-7*, and *1 Timothy 1:8-18*

The church—which is invisible—is made up of all believers in the body of Christ. The church visibly presents itself on earth as local congregations, which are led by pastors.

In the New Testament letters called “the pastoral epistles,” the apostle Paul writes to two young pastors, Timothy and Titus, about how to lead a church. These three letters—1 and 2 Timothy and Titus—belong together. As a group they deal with the *creed* of the church and the *conduct* of the church—what the church teaches and the character of the people who lead.

Paul loved these two young protégés. He called Timothy “my true (or genuine) son in the faith.” Paul had led Timothy to the Lord; his affection for him ran deep. Timotheus, the name he is sometimes called, is made up of two Greek words meaning “dear to God.” He was also dear to the apostle Paul and dear to the local churches.

We first meet Timothy in the books of Acts, Ephesians, and Philippians. We learn he lived in Lystra, and his father was Greek. His grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice, followed the Lord Jesus before him. In Acts 16 we

hear about Timothy's great reputation. As he worked with Paul, he became a protégé in whom Paul put a lot of confidence, even while others betrayed and deceived Him.

This letter is Paul's personal charge to Timothy. Paul uses more personal expressions in this letter than anywhere else in his public speaking or writing. Wouldn't you love to have been Timothy and receive this very practical letter? It outlines a pastor's and a church's responsibilities and priorities. You've got to have more than a steeple on the building to be a real church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The local church is made up of believers who are members of the body of Christ. (And every believer should be involved in a local church, if possible.) In order for the body to function, it needs leadership that meet certain requirements. Their character and caliber will determine if they really belong to the Lord.

The church should function in an orderly way and be known in the community for its good works. The leaders of the local church should be people of faith, motivated by love. Unless faith and love characterize their lives, the officers can't function in the church no matter how much natural ability they have.

For the church within, the worship must be right. For the church outside, good works must be demonstrated. Worship is inside; works are outside.

Paul qualifies what he says as coming by God's authority. When he wrote to the Ephesians, Paul identified himself as an apostle "by the will of God" (Ephesians 1:1). But now as he writes to his young protégé, he said "*God commanded me to be an apostle.*" Paul may have been reluctant to call himself by that title. After all, he hadn't walked with the Lord as the other eleven apostles had. He never knew Jesus as a man but only as the glorified Christ. He likely felt unworthy to be in their camp. But now in God's authority Paul could walk into a synagogue or go before an opposing audience in Athens or a group of rotten sinners in Corinth, and boldly declare the gospel. He was a soldier under orders, an apostle—not by commission, but by commandment. No one laid hands on Paul to make him an apostle, but the Lord Jesus personally gave him the authority.

Simply put, you need to proclaim God's Word with authority or stay quiet.

Paul says he speaks with the authority of “God our Savior.” Is God our *Savior*? Yes, He certainly is. According to John 3:16, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. God provided the sacrifice, and the Lord Jesus is the One who came to this earth and executed it.

Paul also speaks in the authority of “the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope.” Is the Lord Jesus our hope? Yes, He is. Though not often found in Scripture (see only Colossians 1:27), consider this: The Lord Jesus died to save you, and He lives to keep you saved. Some day He will take you to be with Himself and complete that salvation.

When we look backwards, Jesus is our faith; when we look around us today, He is love; and as we look ahead, He is our hope. That hope, anchored in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, actually carries us all the way through our lives.

When Paul greets the young pastor, he says, “grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.” At first glance this sounds like the greetings in Paul’s other epistles. But this time, he added *mercy* to the typical *grace* and *peace*. *Mercy* is an Old Testament word equivalent to *grace*.

Let’s talk about this beautiful word *mercy* for a moment. When we come to God, if we got justice, we’d be condemned on the spot. We want and need mercy. God is rich in mercy, but it’s not available to us until we ask for it. God’s mercy is like money in the bank and God hands us a check. That money is ours, we just need to cash the check. God is merciful to all sinners, even those who turn their backs on Him. But when you come to God, you must come by *faith*—cash the check—and then God will save you by His *grace*. Some people leave that check on the table, never benefiting from the gift given them.

These three words—love, mercy, and grace—are a little trinity. *Love* existed in God before He could care to exercise mercy or grace. God provided *mercy* for the need of sinful people. He’s then acted in *grace* to save because all the demands of His holiness have been satisfied. Therefore, because God is merciful, you can come to Him, and by His grace He’ll save you. You don’t have to bring anything, because really, anything you could bring would only be filthy rags to God. This all expresses His love so great we can’t even measure it.

Paul says this is a gift from God our Father. He's your Father, too, if you have received Christ and have been brought into the family of God. Imagine what a paradigm shift this was for Paul, a former Pharisee, who in Judaism never had the privilege of calling God his Father.

"The Lord Jesus Christ." Everything done in the local church needs to be done in the name of Christ and at His command. He is the Head of the church; He is the Lord. We can be as busy as termites for Him, but it won't matter if they are not the things He told us to do. Seek *His* will. We need not only to *call* Him Lord but also *obey* Him as Lord.

How do you know what it is He wants you to do? The local church's creed must be right before your conduct can be right. It's almost impossible to think wrong and act right. Sadly, we often try to act right even though our thinking is wrong, but we can't keep it up for long. That's why some walk away, thinking the Christian life is too hard. It *is* too hard if you're following your own way. Follow Jesus' way instead. There is only one gospel and one doctrine.

"Doctrine" refers to what the church teaches. What we teach today should be what it was from the very beginning. Following the Day of Pentecost, the new church "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). Four things are the fingerprints of the visible church: doctrine, fellowship, prayers, and the breaking of bread, or the Lord's Supper.

The apostles' doctrine, the basic truths of the faith, taught the plenary (complete), verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, the integrity and inerrancy of the Word of God. They clearly taught the deity of Christ, making it clear Jesus Christ is God. If correct doctrine is not taught, it's not a church, no matter how many deacons, elders, pastors, and worship leaders it might have.

Paul's charge to Timothy to teach the Scriptures makes perfect sense when you consider Timothy is reading this in Ephesus, the heartland of the mystery religions of that day. "*Stay away from the fables and myths,*" Paul continued. Most of these were based on Greek mythology, and the Ephesian believers were to shun them. Philosophers were spiritualizing the Old Testament, calling it myth. Other false teaching was labeling the church a sect of Judaism. "*None of these teachings build you up in the faith,*" Paul writes. And when you sow unbelief, you'll reap a crop of heartless people who lack faith and reject the Word of God.

But if you teach the Word of God, it will grow faith in the people of God's church—faith in God and in His Word. God's Word will nurture love, the active concern for others among your people. They will care for each other out of a pure heart that is so great that it runs against our old nature and proves the Spirit is at work in your body. If faith and love are lacking, you have nothing more than a religious club. But if you live by God's Word, even the form of church government is not so important.

With these two taking the lead, your church can operate in “good conscience.” Too often empty chatter and flowery language will fill the building, but there's no church there. Those who reject the Word of God don't know what they're talking about. Ephesus was full of this kind of empty religious talk. So are religious circles today.

When God gave mankind His Law, it was for his good, but not for his salvation. The Law reveals the will of God—it is morally excellent, good for moral conduct. But the Law cannot save a sinner. Its purpose is to correct us or reveal that we are sinners in need of a Savior. Under the Law, the best man in the world is absolutely condemned; but under the gospel, the worst man can be justified if he will believe in Christ. The Law showed us we could never perform enough good works to be saved. (See what Paul wrote in Romans 8:8—in our flesh, we can't please God.) When modern teachers say we please God by doing this or that, that absolutely contradicts the Word of God. It is impossible to please God—we *cannot* meet His standard.

But read this carefully: Good works cannot produce salvation, but salvation can produce good works. We are not saved *by* good works, but we are saved *to do* good works. (See Ephesians 2:8-10.)

The Law wasn't given to the person who has been made righteous because of their faith in Christ. They have been called to a much higher plane before God. The Law was given to control the natural man, the one who runs up against the Law. “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13 ΚJV) is not given to the child of God who isn't thinking about murdering anyone, but only wants to help. “Thou shalt not kill” was given to one who is a murderer at heart.

And speaking of those who are murderers at heart, Paul now turns and tells his own story. He says he was saved “according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.” Isn't that a wonderful

way to speak of it! Paul is thankful to the Lord Jesus Christ, who put him in the ministry.

Do you know that all believers are “in the ministry”? We are all ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every believer has some service to perform for the Lord. Paul thanks God for allowing him to serve as a missionary. Paul never forgot that before he came to Christ, he was “a blasphemer”—he hated Christ. He persecuted and injured the church.

But the *mercy* of God put him into the ministry. “Because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” So we all were ignorant in our unbelief before we came to Christ. But Paul was (and we are) brought to the place of faith and love in Christ Jesus—by God’s grace.

Paul clearly and definitively declares the reason Christ came to the world: To save sinners. Jesus didn’t come to be the greatest teacher the world has ever known, although He was that. He didn’t come to set a moral example, but He did do that. He came into the world to save sinners.

“Of whom I am chief.” When Paul says he was the chiefest of sinners, he’s not exaggerating. You might think the sin you’ve done makes you beyond saving, but you’re wrong. Paul is the chief of sinners, and the chief of sinners has already been saved. So *you* can be saved if you want to be. The decision rests with you. All you need do is turn to Christ, and He’ll do the rest. He is faithful.

Paul admits that not only was he a preacher of grace, but also an example of the gospel of grace. You can be an example of grace, too.

Paul couldn’t help it—just as he’s declaring the wonderful grace of God, he breaks out in a tremendous doxology. Who is “the King eternal”? He is the Lord Jesus Christ. And who is the Lord Jesus? He is “God who alone is wise.” The Lord Jesus was God in the flesh, and here Paul gives a wonderful testimony to that.

As Paul wraps up his letter, he reminds Timothy that God placed him in this role as pastor. He also reminded him they were fighting a war.

“Put your heart into it. Go get the victory. Be fearless in your struggle. Keep a firm grip on your faith and on yourself.” As a Christian, Timothy faced a real enemy, a spiritual enemy. *“Don’t make shipwreck of the faith—as others are doing.”*

Living the Christian life is not as simple as some would like us to believe. We have intricate personalities, and we face a real danger in our human inconsistencies and failures to accommodate our faith to our failure.

Sadly, Paul knew firsthand about others' failures and what it cost him. So he charged Timothy with faith and courage to live the Christian life in God's power.

NEXT: Why you need to pray.

LESSON 1

 **FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION**

1. Why would the character of the people who lead the church be an important topic for Paul to discuss with Timothy, his young protégé?
2. What happens when churches ignore Paul's teaching and prioritize natural ability over faith, love, and character?
3. How could the knowledge that Jesus Christ is your hope change your attitudes and reactions to difficult things in your life?

4. How can constantly thinking about God's mercy change the way we think about God and about ourselves?

5. What are some ways we can be intentional to make sure we are busy doing what Christ has commanded us to do, not what we want to do ourselves?

6. Why does correct doctrine matter so much to how we live our lives?

7. Imagine you were Timothy reading this letter for the first time. What kind of an impact would what we've read so far have made in your life?

LESSON 2

WHY YOU NEED TO PRAY



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Timothy 2**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Timothy](https://www.TTB.org/1Timothy) to *1 Timothy 1:18–2:5* and *1 Timothy 2:5-15*

Nothing is more important to the ministry than a pastor's character—that's what we learned from Paul's letter to his young protégés last time. Now Paul's instructions broaden to include best practices for the whole church. Simply put, we need to be people who pray. When we pray, we serve the body of Christ in the best way possible. When we pray, we worship God, we're part of sharing the gospel, and we minister to each other.

Paul can speak candidly here because he's writing to his young protégé, not to whole churches. *Not only did God appoint me as an apostle and preacher, but He sent me to the Gentile world. No lie!* Paul says. *I'm proclaiming the faith truthfully*—in contrast to the false teachers that filled the young Christian community.

On this practical topic of prayer, let's start with the challenge to pray for public officials, for kings. *Yes, but are we to pray for a corrupt government?* Remember when Paul wrote this, bloody Nero was on the throne in Rome. Even so, Paul says, we are to pray for kings, whoever they are. Civil government is a gift from God, and we ought to give thanks for it and pray for those in their respected responsibilities.

The benefit of living in a civil world is we can “lead a quiet (inwardly peaceful) and peaceable (outwardly peaceful) life in all godliness and reverence.” In so doing we can carry out our purpose as Christians in the world. We pray for our governments so the gospel might continue to go out to the lost. Why? Because God’s will is that all people might be saved. Prayer invites God into the situation we pray about and asks Him to work on those who will listen and respond. We hold God’s supernatural resources in our hands and only need to ask.

We have only one way to God, and that is through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Mediator, the only way we are heard, saved, or how the world will be rescued (see Acts 4:12). What’s tremendous is if we will turn to Him, He *will* bring us right through to God.

One of the most significant verses in the New Testament affirms and celebrates this relationship we have with Jesus. First Timothy 2:5 says, “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.”

In the Old Testament, Israelites went to the temple where there were many priests to go through to God. But now, Jesus is the only Mediator to whom we need to go. We don’t go through any human being down here; no priest, no minister, no pastor is necessary. But we do need a mediator, and we have one, the Great High Priest—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus links one hand with deity because He is God who became man—*that’s* how He can save us. He links His other hand with yours; He understands you. You can go to Him as your Mediator. He won’t be upset with you or hurt you in any way. You may say, “Well, I’ve failed. I’ve done something sinful, and I’ve come short of the glory of God.” He knows that, and He still loves you.

That is the wonder of it all! He takes hold of us, and also holds on to God. As our Savior, He paid the price for our salvation. As lost sinners, we need to be redeemed. Jesus must be our substitute. He paid our ransom—the price to redeem us. He paid the debt “for all”—not just for Jews, not just for the elect, but for everyone. Because all people must come through Jesus Christ to be saved.

Given we have the confidence of Jesus as our Mediator, how should we then pray?

Paul gets very practical here. Every place where believers meet needs to be a place of prayer. Prayer should be public as well as private. When we come together, we should be “without wrath,” as in we come with our sins confessed. Don’t pray if you have anger or bitterness in your heart. Deal with those things privately with God so you can come ready for your prayers to be effective.

Come to prayer with faith, too, “without ... doubting.” Hebrews 11:6 tells us it’s impossible to please God without faith. When we come to God, we must believe He is and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him. Perhaps one reason prayer meetings are so thinly attended is because people don’t believe God will hear and answer their prayer. If you want to make a prayer meeting what it ought to be, come with sins confessed, no bitterness or anger in your heart, come in faith, believing God will hear and answer.

What about my posture? Is it important to kneel? Should I lift my hands? Our posture reflects our heart, but it doesn’t make prayer any more or less effective. Paul specifically wanted the men to pray just as they lived holy lives every day.

Now Paul instructs women in how to pray, as well as how to dress and serve in the local church. This passage has been used to support two extreme positions relative to a woman’s role in the church.

One position welcomes women to play a role of leadership in all public services. They allow for women preachers, elders, and officers. No position is withheld from them and, as a result, the women are not only prominent but often dominant in the church.

The other extreme position doesn’t allow women any place in public services. You never hear the voice of a woman in public meetings, not even in singing. This position pushes women to the background and loses a great deal of talent and godly influence that women could contribute if permitted to do so. Churches miss something when they refuse to allow women to serve. God can and does use women in His work.

The confusion surrounding this practical issue has been brought about by a misunderstanding of this passage in Paul's letter and also by an unfamiliarity with the Roman world of Paul's day.

Let's establish first that God *has* used women. In a survey of God's Word you'll meet Deborah, Queen Esther, Ruth, and others. In church history, there is a long list of women whom God has used in a wonderful way.

However, in the Roman world, the female principle was a part of all the heathen religions, and women occupied a prominent place. In Corinth, the worship of Aphrodite included prostitution with thousands of vestal virgins and was actually made into a religion. These prostitutes were characterized by very disheveled hair. The reason God said a woman should cover her head was so she would not be associated with religions like this.

In Ephesus, where Timothy was at this time of Paul's letter, women occupied a prominent position in the temple of Diana. In all the mystery religions, priestesses offered sexual practices. This explains why Paul gets specific with how women were to dress—modestly and without costly or gaudy accessories, trying to be sexually or physically attractive. Such appeal characterized the pagan religions in the Roman world, and Paul stressed that it shouldn't be a part of the public services of the Christian churches.

Instead, Paul said, let a woman's inner life be on display as they do something beautiful for God. There's nothing wrong in dressing in an attractive way, but when you go to God in prayer, you don't need that outward adornment—you need inward adornment. When a woman plays any public role in church, like singing or having any part in a church service, she ought to keep in mind that her spiritual qualities should be the most evident. Her character and conduct contribute to the orderly and edifying activities; don't put the focus on external things. Seek to please God.

But wasn't it a woman who ushered sin into the world? Yes, it's true that Eve's sin introduced sin. Now every time a woman bears a child, she brings another sinner into the world, because that's all she can bring into the world. But it's also true that Mary brought the Lord Jesus, the Savior, into the world. So how are women saved? By childbearing—because Mary brought the Savior into the world. You can't say that a woman brought sin into the world,

unless you also add that a woman brought the Savior into the world. It wasn't a man who bore a Savior—a woman did. But both men and women are saved by faith, and a woman is to grow in love and holiness just as a man is.

NEXT: The private life of a pastor.

LESSON 2



FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. How could Paul hope to live a peaceable life with someone like Nero as emperor?
2. In your own words, what does it mean that Jesus is the Mediator between God and us?
3. How could Jesus possibly understand us?

4. The idea that prayer needs to be public as well as private might be new to you. How does this concept change your thinking about prayer and your prayer habits?

5. Why would our own private sins affect our prayers?

6. If you could go back in time to chat with Paul while he wrote 1 Timothy, what questions would you have for him about his teaching on men and women in the church?

7. Our primary concern today may not be being confused for a false religion, but why should we carefully consider what these verses mean for believers today?

**When we pray,
we serve the
body of Christ**

*in the best way
possible.*



THRUthe **BIBLE**

LESSON 3

A WORD TO PASTORS



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Timothy 3**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Timothy](https://www.TTB.org/1Timothy) to *1 Timothy 3:1-8* and *1 Timothy 3:8-16*

To his young protégés, Paul says it's a good thing to want to be a pastor. It's a "faithful saying," one that stands the test of time. If you are qualified and want to be in a place where you can use the gift the Spirit of God has given you—then seek that office. (However, if you don't have the spiritual gift and don't feel led—then by all means, don't feel bad about not being in ministry.)

In the early church the pastor was called by several different titles: elder, shepherd, bishop or overseer, and minister. Never was the pastor called "reverend," which means "that which incites terror." Reverend applies only to God.

A bishop in the early church didn't have authority over other bishops or elders or churches. Even Paul, who founded a number of churches, never spoke of himself as the one ruling a church. The minister is one who *serves* the church, not rules over it.

A pastor ought to be many things. Here's a list to start:

- "Blameless." Right from the start you have to accept that if you hold an office in the church you *will* be blamed for things. What's important is that the accusation must not be true. An elder must be blameless in

the sense that he will not be found guilty of anything of which he might be accused.

- “The husband of one wife.” This can be interpreted two ways. First, that the elder shouldn’t have *two* wives (polygamy was common in Paul’s day). It could also mean that the pastor ought to be married. (It’s true that Paul likely was not married, but he must have been previously in order to be a member of the Sanhedrin. Likely, Paul was a widower who had not remarried in order to be free to travel as an apostle.)
- “Temperate.” An elder should be calm and cautious. He should know how to keep his cool.
- “Sober-minded.” He’s serious-minded about the office he holds. He means business.
- “Of good behavior.” An elder should be orderly in his conduct. He stays away from questionable things.
- “Hospitable.” An elder is the type to show love for others and be a friend to believers, especially welcoming to strangers.
- “Able to teach.” An elder in a church must be able to teach the Word of God.

An elder’s life should also be defined by what he doesn’t do:

- “Not given to wine.” He’s not dependent on alcohol.
- “Not violent.” He’s not quarrelsome but instead he’s peaceable.
- “Not greedy for money” The love of money is a root of all evil we’re told later in this letter. The way a church officer handles his own money or the church’s can lead him into trouble. “...But gentle.” An elder should be someone you can reason with and talk to.
- “Not quarrelsome.” He shouldn’t be constantly stirring up trouble in the church.
- “Not covetous.” He doesn’t worship money. He doesn’t put the pursuit of wealth above everything else.

An elder must also rule his own household well. He’s dignified and commands respect in every way without being a dictator.

A man does not know how to rule the house of God if he cannot rule his own home.

An elder must also be mature in his faith; he's not a new Christian who is a target for pride. Pride was Satan's great sin and is often the sin of elders and preachers. Pride is dangerous for all of us, but it's inexcusable in the church.

An elder must also have a good reputation and be well thought of by those outside the church. In other words, he pays his bills, is trustworthy, and tells the truth. If he doesn't do these things, he would better represent the devil than he would represent the cause of Christ.

Another office in the church is a deacon, also translated "minister," a general term for a servant or worker. Paul and Apollos are called deacons. Matthew calls the Lord Jesus a minister (Matthew 20:28 κλν). Even some others are called workers of the devil (see 2 Corinthians 11:15).

A deacon in the church deals with the practical, material matters of the church, but he should also be a spiritual man. Just because someone is a successful businessman doesn't mean he will make a good deacon.

A deacon's personal and spiritual qualifications are a priority over his practical functions. Here they are:

- Like the other offices, a deacon should be respectful, a man of dignity. His word should mean something. He shouldn't be addicted to alcohol or money. He's able to steward himself and the church's resources with integrity—allotting funds to the intended cause to which it was given. The church ought to be able to present the highest of financial examination. Deacons must also be serious-minded when it comes to dealing with the mystery of the faith. They should not take advantage of their position in order to get control. Let them prove themselves first, their skill, their trustworthiness, etc. If they turn out to be above reproach, let them serve as deacons.
- A deacon also holds to the "mystery of the faith," the doctrines of the faith that were previously not known in the Old Testament but that are made clear in the New Testament in Christ. He lives out that faith before a watching world.
- The spiritual qualifications the Bible lays down for church officers must still hold good today if the church is to represent the Lord Jesus

Christ here on this earth. The church and its officers must hold to New Testament doctrine, calling sin the sins which are clearly labeled as such in the Word of God. They must act on God's behalf, even in the toughest of times, with a pure conscience. This takes a Christian maturity, which is why the character of an officer of the church must be proven over time to be blameless.

- Even the wives of deacons must measure up to certain godly standards. They should be worthy of respect and serious/calm. They should not be given to gossip, but self-controlled, thoroughly trustworthy in all things. She should be faithful to her husband, to Christ Himself, and to His cause.
- The deacons are to meet the same personal and family requirements as elders, being found in good standing in the community and known as someone who can be trusted. This allows them the freedom to share their personal faith in Jesus Christ with confidence and represent the church of Christ with courage.

Paul sums up his lists of qualifications with an umbrella statement: *I've written this to you so you will know how to act in the house of God.* The church is the foundational pillar, the bedrock—it is the prop and support of the truth. If the officers don't represent the truth, the church has no foundation, no prop, and it can't hold up the truth of God. That's the reason the officers of the church must live faithful lives—so they can represent and proclaim the truth of God to the world.

Then, right in the middle of this letter about church order, Paul breaks out in either a song of worship to God or by reciting a creed—a confession of faith about the core of what they believe about God. Either way, he declares with beauty and clarity what they believe about God.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.

-1 Timothy 3:16

Paul declares what they believe about God in this beautiful doxology. He says the mystery of godliness is that God in the person of Jesus Christ entered our world, paid the penalty of our sin, and is making men and women godly.

“God was manifested in the flesh.” Certainly Paul is teaching the virgin birth of Christ, but he is also speaking of Christ’s existence before He came as a baby. That existence was spiritual: He was “... in form of God, He dwelled in absolute brilliance of glory, and as a Spirit ...” (see Philippians 2:6, Hebrews 1:3, and John 4:24). From this preexisting glory, not able to be seen by our human eyes, Jesus took on flesh and became a man to enter into our human condition (see John 1:14). Under these conditions, the attributes of His essential spiritual personality were veiled. Just as God was not visible in the Tabernacle in the wilderness, so Jesus Christ was veiled when He tabernacled with us in human form. He didn’t show us who He really was. The One who in the beginning was God, was with God, and who made all things, became a little, helpless baby. He was the image of the invisible God and had all power in heaven and in earth, but down here He took upon Himself human flesh. Because mankind didn’t recognize Him, they treated Him as an imposter, a usurper, and a blasphemer. He was hated, persecuted, and murdered. God manifest in the flesh was poor, was tempted and tried, and actually shed tears.

“Justified in the Spirit.” Yet in all that, it was His Spirit that was justified. At His resurrection, His goal was accomplished. At times during His earthly journey His glory broke out, revealing and expressing and witnessing to who Jesus really was. Angels cheered at His virgin birth. His glory was glimpsed at His baptism, at His transfiguration, and at the time of His arrest. Even when Jesus hung on the cross, something happened to cause the watching centurion to say, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:54). But it was when He came back from the dead that we see Him now justified. He was clearly still in the flesh, but now justified in the Spirit: “sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:44). No enemy laid a hand on Him after He was raised from the dead. He will never be dishonored again.

This is a tremendous truth: because He came down here and has now returned to the right hand of God, we can be justified. Down here He was delivered up for our offenses—He took our place as a sinner, and now He gives us His place in heaven and we are justified. This is amazing!

We haven’t yet caught on yet, but the song that will be sung throughout eternity is the song of redemption. The angels knew it when they watched Jesus’ actions unfold. And now Jesus has gone back to heaven, and all the created intelligences of heaven worship Him because He made redemption possible for mankind.

And still today we preach His story and His offer of salvation to the nations, and many trust Him as their Savior.

And where is Jesus today? He was welcomed into glory and this very moment He is at God's right hand.

Have you talked to Him today? Have you told Him you love Him, and have you thanked Him for all He has done? He is your wonderful Savior.

NEXT: How to spot a false teacher.

7. Imagine you were tasked to put together a job description for church leadership based on what you see in 1 Timothy. What would that description sound like?

**The song that
will be sung
throughout
eternity is
the song of
redemption.**



THRUthe **BIBLE**

LESSON 4

HOW TO SPOT A FAKE



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Timothy 4**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Timothy](https://www.TTB.org/1Timothy) to *1 Timothy 3:16–4:6* and *1 Timothy 4:6-16*

We ended our last lesson on a beautiful high note, declaring what we believe about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now in sharp contrast, Paul draws a hard, sad conclusion: Some believers will abandon the Christian faith. They will follow spirits that deceive and believe what the demons teach. And what's worse, this apostasy is already happening inside the church.

Remember when Paul was in Ephesus he warned them about wolves in sheep's clothing coming into the church and that they would deceive the believers. Error had already entered the church. Heretical teachers already were misleading a great company of people. Already they were being seduced by the doctrines of demons. We should stay clear of them, Paul said. Test each spirit to see if they teach doctrine correctly that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh and we are saved through His redemption He accomplished for us on the cross.

The apostate false teachers will pretend to be super-duper saints who claim to have something special. When really, if you do have the truth, it will make you humble. You realize how little you know. False teachers who know very

little about the Word of God, speak as if they were authorities, pretending to be something they are not.

These false teachers had a list of things they made up that was supposed to make you godly. Even in Jesus' day people went off from Judaism into cults and "isms." This is not something new in our day. In this first-century church some false teachers added on requirements "from God." Some, like the Essenes, said you shouldn't marry. Others made up a special diet, as if food could make you more acceptable to God. The Word of God doesn't condemn food; it commends it. Return thanks for the food God provides to nourish your body.

Instead of getting lost on some tangent, our diet is to be "nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine." Feed yourself on good teaching, and that will fill you up.

Paul warns Timothy that apostasy and false teaching would come into the church and that some who once professed faith in Jesus Christ as Savior would come to the place where they deny Him. *Don't be distracted or disheartened by this*, Paul said. *Instead, just keep teaching the Word of God.* Remember Timothy was ministering in Ephesus, where false religion and the work of Satan ran rampant. Even so, Paul praised Timothy for staying close to God's Word. Follow the sound teaching of the gospel, which strengthens you.

Also, steer clear of the stories and myths that are nothing but fiction. Take the time and trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit. Too often people focus on the don'ts more than what we should be doing: Learn how to be godly. Just like we exercise to strengthen the body, train yourself to be godly.

This is a great metaphor, considering where Timothy was. Ephesus boasted a coliseum that sat 100,000 people. It dominated the cityscape and was where the Olympic games were held. *Physical exercise is great*, Paul writes, *but let's hold things in correct perspective.* Are you as anxious about godliness as you are about physical exercise? Not only does a godly life pay off down here, but it will pay off in eternity. The physical ends at the end of this life, but godliness is carried over into the next. Any Christian who lives a careless life rather than a godly life will find that even in eternity he will pay for it. This is truth you can count on in first-century in Ephesus and in the twenty-first century.

It's the truth—if you stand for Jesus Christ today, it will cost you something. If you say Jesus is Savior of all people—that whoever you are, He's your Savior and He's the only Savior—you will suffer for this. It's still true. He is the Savior of all men, but people have the choice to turn Him down. Christ is the Savior of all men, but only those who believe will be saved (see John 3:16 and 1 John 2:2).

Teach these things, Timothy.

Paul strengthened his young protégé with a challenge. Don't let people in your church criticize you because you are young. Instead, be an example to them by not acting like a young fool. After all, your age is not what's important, but the character of your life should set you apart. Be an example in your speech, in your behavior, by loving people, in believing God, and in living a pure life.

Stay at your post reading Scripture, giving counsel, and teaching. Yes, read Scripture aloud. Why? To comfort and to teach. The Word of God needs to be read. A main function of the church is to get people into the Word of God.

This is true for us personally. We can only grow personally by reading the Word for ourselves. Are *you* further along spiritually today than you were this time last year? Are you growing in grace and the knowledge of Christ? The only way to do so is by reading the great truths of the Word of God.

Paul also encouraged Timothy to use his spiritual gifts. The Spirit of God gives to every believer a gift, and Timothy had a gift he was to use. Earlier, the officers of the church had laid hands on Timothy. This meaningful act illustrates a partnership in the ministry. Every minister who is ordained and approved should have hands put on him by those who are partners with him.

Lastly, Paul challenges Timothy—and by extension every Christian—to be diligent in his study of God's Word. Anyone who ministers (and that's all of us) needs to study the Word of God. Give yourself wholly to it. It's worthy of all you can give to it, and we can never give as much to it as it should have. Invest your time and attention to the priority of God's Word in your life.

NEXT: How to live true to what you know is real.

LESSON 4



FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. What does the idea of testing every spirit to see if they teach sound doctrine look like in practice?
2. How can an attitude like humility be put into practice in everyday life?
3. What are some teachings today that may be popular, but aren't good doctrine?

7. What are some ways you can practice reading the Word of God aloud, both as an individual and in groups like your family or church?

LESSON 5

SO THE WORLD CAN SEE



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Timothy 5–6**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Timothy](https://www.TTB.org/1Timothy) to *1 Timothy 5:1-19* and *1 Timothy 5:19–6:21*

Authenticity: Living true to what you know is real. That's Paul's instruction to men and women in the church about how to live an authentic Christian life. You are living as a testimony to the world, he says. Don't give the enemy any reason to use your life to bring shame on the name of the Lord Jesus.

In chapters 5 and 6, we are instructed on the very practical duties of officers in the church. These practical questions get right down to the nitty-gritty of church life today. What they lack in romance, they make up for in realistic and meaningful help.

How should I relate to my elders in the church?

Don't rebuke them publicly. As a young man, Timothy needed to be tactful in his relationship with the older men in the church. Don't be a know-it-all or a dictator over them. Encourage them and, if necessary, have a word privately. Same is true for those his own age—maintain a sweet relationship with them.

How should I relate to the women in my church?

Be very careful in your relationships with the opposite sex. Nothing hurts a church more or has more frequently wrecked the church's ministry than sin in this area.

How should I care for the most vulnerable in the church?

In that day, widows were the neediest group in the church. Paul told Timothy to honor them, show them value. A widow often had no other source of help than her family or church. God uses both to help answer her need.

The early church took care of their widows, but they were very careful to manage it. The deacons investigated who were truly widows, to discover their need and how the church could help. Paul makes it clear it's the responsibility of families to care for women alone. In fact, if you're not taking care of your own, you have no testimony for God at work or at church.

This was God's method then and now and a much neglected area in the family and the church today.

If the widow is still of the age where she can work, she might be able to take care of herself. Don't help everyone who comes along, but if she's the kind of person who is known by her character and good works, then help her. When we find a widow in need like this, we are to help her. It is quite lovely when we do things God's way.

Think of the widows in your church. Are they lonely and seldom visited? Her children may have moved away or died, and she may have physical needs. Too often the church ignores such need. Each family should support their own widows, so the church can concentrate on the widows who are without family and are in real need. If a church took care of its widows, its testimony would not go unnoticed by the world.

Younger widows are likely to remarry, though if they do, they should be aware of the danger of forgetting their faith. But it's good, Paul said, for them to remarry so they don't have too much extra time on their hands. Too easily extra time is filled with gossip and other unedifying things. Better to be a homemaker and manage the household and raise children and, in so doing, not give any place for the adversary to speak badly of your life.

In this whole section, Paul calls us all to have the highest testimony before the world—that everyone can see what it looks like to follow Christ with genuine faith.

HOW TO HONOR THOSE WHO TEACH YOU

The early church paid their teachers, and a good teacher likely was paid a little bit more. They drew upon Old Testament instruction (Deuteronomy 25:4) and Jesus' words (Luke 10:7) on the principle that a laborer of any kind is worthy of his reward.

The early church also wanted to nip any early bud of gossip and misunderstanding by making it unacceptable to whisper in his ear any gossip about the pastor or a church officer. People needed to be able to *prove* their accusations before witnesses. Have all the facts before you talk. And if you have the facts, rather than scatter the scandal abroad, you should seek to correct the problem by first going to the proper authorities. Any accusation should be given before more than one witness.

If the facts reveal that a church leader has sinned, he is to be rebuked. *Is this to be done publicly?* When a church member sins and it doesn't concern the congregation, it shouldn't be brought out into the open, nor does it need to be confessed publicly. However, when a leader in the church sins and it has hurt the church, then it needs to be known. When sin is hidden in the life of a church leader, it does the church great harm. Paul warns not to show partiality in the church, but to tread everyone alike.

If someone is new to faith in Jesus Christ, you're also to give them a chance to grow up in the Lord before putting them in a place of leadership. Don't suddenly lay hands on them, indicating a partnership in the ministry. Let them become thoroughly grounded in the Word before you allow the young Christian to be in the position of a teacher or else the theology he teaches might be weird. When the Word of God is taught in the church it should build men and women up in the faith. What is taught from God's Word is often the test of spiritual maturity, and experience can prove the truth of it. Clearly when an experience contradicts the Bible's clear teaching, it is not from God at all.

Pastor Timothy had many young converts in the church at Ephesus, and they needed teaching. It was a serious business for him to select the teachers and appoint them to teach the Word of God. He had to "keep [himself] pure." In other words, *Don't compromise, Timothy. Don't let someone talk you into letting a young convert teach. You will be a partner in sin if you do. Make sure the teachers are anchored in the Word of God.*

WHEN SOMEONE SINS IN THE CHURCH

Sometimes God will judge a Christian's sins right here and now. If He doesn't judge them immediately, it doesn't mean He's not going to judge. God will move in judgment eventually. A Christian isn't going to get by with sin; either you will judge yourself, or God will judge you. If you judge yourself, the matter is settled. If not, He will judge. Your salvation is never in jeopardy, because it was paid for by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Your standing before God is secure for eternity. But at His Bema seat judgment, you might lose out on rewards as a consequence for your sin.

The same principle applies to good works. Sometimes God blesses a believer down here for something he's done for which God can reward him. Others will have to wait until they are in His presence to receive their reward, which will be the case of a great many Christians.

HOW TO TREAT A FELLOW BELIEVER WITH WHOM YOU WORK

Put in a full day's work for a full day's pay. Sounds pretty clear, doesn't it? It's good to get your hands dirty with hard work and to fully engage your brainpower. You see, Christianity gets out into the workshop this way. Work in such a way that you reflect well on your boss and so the name of Jesus Christ and the teaching about Him would be honored among your coworkers. Nobody in your company scoffs at the gospel because they think you're a hypocrite.

Don't be proud in your witness. Don't stir things up. Certainly there might be in your company people who are argumentative and go on and on, saying nothing. Some even try to use the gospel to take advantage of people. Stay far away from people like this. They cause serious trouble.

Pride will always cause trouble, and it is unbecoming in a child of God. Pride is a constant danger—pride of place, pride of race, pride of face, and pride of grace. Some people are even proud that they've been saved by the grace of God! But seriously, Christians have plenty to be humble about. We are sinners saved by the grace of God.

The apostle Paul can't help but hold a worship service here, right in the middle of his instructions. When talking about Jesus, he tells us Jesus Christ is "the blessed and only Potentate [He's the absolute Ruler], the

King of kings and Lord of lords, [Jesus Christ] alone has immortality [He is exempt from death], dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.”
(Read 1 Timothy 6:13-16 out loud and worship the Lord!)

BE CONTENT WITH YOUR LIFE

When you see Jesus in His proper place, you can then be satisfied with the position in life God has given you. Everything you have is a gift from Him. We brought nothing into the world and we'll carry nothing out. Paul then gives a couple brief challenges that transcend generations.

Don't be fooled into thinking money will bring you satisfaction. Money isn't evil in itself, but the love of money is the root of all evil. Run hard and fast away from this temptation so it doesn't trip you up. Instead, pursue these virtues: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

Fight the good fight of faith. This fight may be outward or inward, physical or spiritual, but it's always worth it. Grab on to this eternal life to which you have been called. Embrace it with all your heart.

Lay hold on eternal life. This is the way you make it clear by your life that you are a child of God. When Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate, He gave a good witness. We, too, should give a blameless witness when we stand before Jesus at His appearing. God will give us the power to be without rebuke or accusation and act like His child. Distribute it among those who need it. Be ready to sympathize and share it. Use it to communicate the gospel. Be extravagantly generous. If you do that, you'll build a foundation that will last for eternity, investing in the real life to come.

If you have riches in this world, don't put your trust in them. It's here today and gone tomorrow. Instead, trust in the living God who gives us richly all things to enjoy. If you have money, put it to good use. Distribute it among those who need it. Be ready to sympathize and share it. Use it to communicate the gospel. Be extravagantly generous. If you do that, you'll build a foundation that will last for eternity, investing in the real life to come.

As a final word to Timothy, Paul calls on his young protégé to guard the treasure he was given. Keep safe the deposit of godly truth that has been entrusted to you. Avoid so-called “experts” who love the sound of their own voice. People caught up in a lot of talk can miss the whole point of faith. Don’t try to be an intellectual teacher; avoid man’s philosophies and just preach the Word.

And because he knew he would need it, Paul closes his first letter to Timothy with the blessing we leave with you now, “Grace be with you. Amen.”

LESSON 5



FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. How could a lack of authenticity affect an individual Christian and the church as a whole?
2. What are some things that Paul's instructions on the right way to rebuke someone tell us about confronting sin in the church?
3. Why could widows be neglected easily, even in the church?

7. If you could go back in time and ask Paul for some advice on being content, what do you think his answer might be?

Christians have plenty to
BE HUMBLE ABOUT.
WE ARE SINNERS
saved BY THE
GRACE OF GOD.



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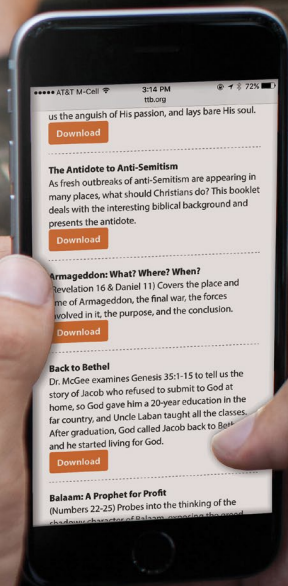
A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are both gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a park-like setting.

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