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The Book of 1 Timothy

A practical Bible Commentary by Terry Baxter



The two Epistles to Timothy and one to Titus belong to a collection commonly referred to as the pastoral Epistles. They were written toward the end of Paul's life to young men he had personally trained and mentored into ministry. It is commonly believed that Paul wrote 1 Timothy around A.D. 63. We know Timothy had a Jewish mother and a Greek father. When Paul met him, he was already a strong believer having been instructed in the Scriptures by his mother and grandmother. Paul returned to the area of Lystra where Timothy and his family lived after the Jerusalem Council. (See Acts 15.) He then recruited Timothy to join his ministry team and Timothy became a selfless servant, serving him like a son serving his beloved father. Paul often sent him to minister in his own absence to many churches while he himself was imprisoned at Rome and it appears that Timothy himself was imprisoned for a short period of time for the sake of the gospel. As a disciple maker, Paul was an arrow-maker. He prepared young men, women, and churches for God's quiver, but He understood that God was the One responsible to shoot them into the world for His glory. Though young, Timothy became an influential itinerant pastor in the early churches that were under Paul's direction as part of the second wave of Christian leaders in the early church as the early Apostles were being promoted to glory.

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Edited by Dan Jones

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The Book of Titus: A Practical Commentary by Terry Baxter

(Edited and occasional added comment by Dan Jones)

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Introduction: 1 Timothy 1:1-2

“1) Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope, 2) To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The two Epistles to Timothy and one to Titus belong to a collection commonly referred to as the pastoral Epistles. They were written toward the end of Paul's life to young men he had personally trained and mentored into ministry. The date of 1 Timothy is believed to be around A.D. 63.

The story of Timothy starts in Acts 16:1-5. Paul recruited him as he passed through Lystra. His mother was Jewish, but his father was Greek. He was already a strong believer having been instructed in the Scriptures by his believing mother and grandmother. (See Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5 & 2 Timothy 3:14-17)

Timothy is a prime example of the impact Christian parents should have on the lives of their children. They need to be intentional and proactive with Christian living and Bible instruction. Faith in God often starts in the home during the formative years.

Timothy was well spoken of by the churches in his region. He may have come to know the Lord during Paul's first missionary journey. (See Acts 14) By this point Paul and Barnabas were ministering to both Jews and Greeks. It was here at Lystra that Paul was stoned and left for dead. While the believers were standing around him, he arose and entered the city and delivered a moving message about suffering, tribulation, and the kingdom of God. (See Acts 14:19-23)

After the Jerusalem council, Paul returned to this region to strengthen the churches and recruited Timothy to join his ministry team in the absence of Mark and Barnabas. According to Philippians 2:19-23, Timothy became a selfless servant to Paul. He served Paul like a son serving his beloved father.

Paul poured his life into Timothy and mentored him into pastoral ministry. Paul often sent him to minister in his own absence to many churches while he himself was imprisoned at Rome. Though young, he became an influential itinerant pastor in the early churches that were under Paul's direction.

According to Hebrews 13:23, it appears that Timothy himself was imprisoned for a short period of time for the sake of the gospel. It can be argued that he became part of the second wave of Christian leaders in the early church to pick up the mantle as the early Apostles were being promoted to glory.

Paul devoted time in prison not only writing to churches, but also corresponding with young men whom God was raising up. Timothy and Titus are two examples of many that Paul invested in.

(See Philippians 2:25-30 for an example of Epaphroditus and Acts 18:1-2 for Aquila and Priscilla)

Notice in 1 Timothy 1:2, Paul entrusted Timothy to “grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” As a disciple-maker, Paul was an arrow-maker. He prepared young men, women, and churches for God’s quiver, but He understood that God was the One responsible to shoot them into the world for His glory. He prayed for them and did everything he could to encourage them, but he turned them over to God and His grace. (See his final farewell to the believers in Ephesus: Acts 20:24-38.) Paul was conscious of his own limitations and mortality. He left people in the sovereign grace of God.

Establishing The Timeline: 1 Timothy 1:3

“3) As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,”

Our first task is to lay out a basic timeline leading up to this book. Timothy was recruited by Paul in Acts 16. He accompanied him on his second missionary journey as he was delivering the decree from the Jerusalem council. He accompanied Paul and Silas on this trip, planting many churches even into Macedonia. This was believed to be between A.D. 49-52. It appears that Paul left Aquila and Priscilla behind in Ephesus during this journey. (See Acts 19:18-22) Meanwhile, Paul headed back to Antioch.

On his third missionary journey, he was again visiting many churches and strengthening the disciples. There was much work to be done. This trip again brought him through Ephesus. (See Acts 18:23-20:1) A reading of this section of the book of Acts reveals how mightily God was working in Ephesus and the opposition that developed.

This time, as Paul departed for Macedonia, he left Timothy in Ephesus to help organize the church and deal with numerous problematic issues, especially related to strange doctrines that were making inroads into the church. It is believed that the third missionary journey took place between A.D. 53-57.

To help fill in the timeline, the Epistle to the church of Ephesus was written from Rome as one of his five prison Epistles. Paul was in prison in Rome between A.D. 60-64. This first Epistle to Timothy was also written from Rome.

Just to put things in perspective, the church at Ephesus was in existence nearly fifteen years prior to receiving the book of Ephesians from Paul. Timothy spent significant time there helping set things in order.

A Solid Biblical Foundation: 1 Timothy 1:3-4

“3) As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, 4) nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.”

Ministry has two significant callings. One is to preach the Word and lay down a solid biblical foundation. (See 2 Timothy 3:16-4:8) The second is to expose false and erroneous beliefs, doctrines, and speculations. According to our text, this was why Paul left Timothy in Ephesus. The church had become a gathering place for people with erroneous religious teachings and ideas. There has never been a lack of tavern theologians who have no clue what they believe or why.

But why did Paul pick Timothy for the task? The answer is simple. He had an unusually strong biblical heritage. 2 Timothy 1:5 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17 stresses the fact that he was nurtured by his mother and grandmother in the sacred writings. He was taught the Word of God from childhood. He had a solid biblical foundation.

Paul's final admonition to Timothy was to “preach the Word.” He was to be diligent in season and out of season. He was to stick to the Word of God no matter where culture or went or what was trending in pop theology in the church.

This is absolutely imperative in our day. Every Christian should make a priority of daily personal Bible study and seek out a church that is built on the solid rock of Scripture. There is an alarming amount of doctrinal junk and false teachings floating around in Christian circles today.

We also need to follow the example of Lois and Eunice and make sure our children and grandchildren have a solid biblical foundation. (2 Timothy 1:5) Their future depends on it! Very possibly, they will be the ones God will tap to bring revival to the church and help spread the gospel to our broken world.

The Way of Faith: 1 Timothy 1:4

“4) ... rather than furthering the administration of God, which is by faith.”

We now have a clue of the battle waging in the church in Ephesus. The whole foundation of faith was under attack. The New American Standard Bible 2020 translation says, “which give rise to useless speculation rather than advance the plan of God, which is by faith, so I urge you.”

Faith can be undermined by legalism, self-effort, religious rituals, or intellectualism. “God” can be reduced to mere ideology and mental reasoning. These four tendencies all sidestep a dynamic relationship with God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

My two favorite Scriptures to combat these tendencies in my personal life are 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 and Galatians 3:1-5. Take a moment and read these verses. They are amazing and stretching.

Both of these texts stress the point that God wants our faith to be anchored in His active power and grace. He wants our relationship with Christ to be dynamic and not passive. He wants intimate fellowship with us that adorns our life with His constant power, glory, and presence.

They both stress the point that God wants to lift us to His reality rather than leaving us to the natural tendency of reducing Him to our small boxes of naturalism, humanism, psychology, dead theology, legalism, or religious rituals. All of these tragically minimize God and take Him prisoner to religious speculations. Listen to me: “God” can be reduced to an intellectual concept rather than the living and active being who created the universe.

Timothy was left behind to fight this drift among the believers in the church of Ephesus. The presence and power of God are accessed by dynamic faith and not by mere intellectual reasoning or good religious deeds.

Here is the challenge: The living, active, and powerful God wants to be present in our daily lives in all of His glory, but we often stuff Him in our small box of religion and open it only when we are in crisis or in need of a favor. This is totally dysfunctional but is the natural tendency of all people.

Biblical faith is the opposite of this tendency. Biblical faith removes the boxes and invites God to be God. Biblical faith aligns human experience to the power of God and His sovereignty. Biblical faith liberates Jesus to be Lord and positions us as His servants. Biblical faith pursues the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Paul left Timothy behind in Ephesus to teach them the way of faith.

The Goal of Biblical Instruction: 1 Timothy 1:5

“5) But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

Paul had a clearly defined goal for his instruction and teaching among believers. Notice the previous verse ended with dynamic faith and this verse begins with agape love. The two walk hand-in-hand through all of Paul’s writings. We can conclude that faith and love fuel each other.

This verse is crucial because it defines the inner soil where agape love thrives. It comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. These are the result of the inner work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

The Holy Spirit starts by cleaning up and changing the heart of the new believer. Over time, He removes the deeds of the flesh and replaces them with the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:16-24) Biblical instruction and discipleship intentionally aims at this process.

The next big step is working on a clear conscience. This involves the healing of all broken relationships. It works through the forgiving and making right process with past relationships and approaches new relationships with honor, dignity, respect, and purity. A clear conscience removes the basis of all inner guilt, condemnation, and regret stemming from past and present actions, behavior, and interaction with others. Paul viewed this process as essential. This journey enhances the inner healing process.

The above two important steps result in a sincere faith. This faith is not vindictive, manipulative, or self-centered. Nor is it driven by greed. It is a faith devoted to advancing the plans and purposes of God. It is a faith that puts God and others above self.

When these three measures converge in the life of a believer, agape love begins to flow through them. God begins to work through them in extraordinary ways. They become branches that bear much fruit for the glory of God.

We can conclude that 1 Timothy 1:5 was the mission statement behind Paul's teaching and instruction. He preached a gospel that changed lives.

I often come back to this verse in my own life. I consciously work toward the goal of a pure heart, good conscience, and sincere faith. I yearn to be more like Jesus. This should be the #1 pursuit of every believer.

Tension and Conflict: 1 Timothy 1:6-7

“6) For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, 7) wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.”

These two verses are built on verse 5. When agape love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith are set aside, life itself becomes heresy. People say they believe in Jesus Christ and His Word, but they have not made Him Lord nor do they submit to the authority of Scripture.

When they stray from these things, they get caught up in fruitless discussions. They argue and debate God's Word, but there is no fruit in their lives and no godly character. The result is tension and conflict in the church.

Verse 6 says they want to be teachers of the Law, but that is the problem. They speak with authority, but they are void of understanding. The priests, scribes, and Pharisees that constantly opposed Jesus all fit into this category.

Beware lest you have a system of theology but no inner godliness. If your soul is not converted by the grace of God, your spirit is still dead. You will not be able to discern the truth and wisdom of Scripture.

1 Corinthians 2:6-3:2 talks about three kinds of people. There is the spiritual man, the natural man, and the carnal man. Let's briefly look at each of these because they help us understand the challenge Timothy was facing in Ephesus.

The spiritual man or woman lives on the level of the Spirit. The human spirit has been made alive by the Holy Spirit and they are therefore able to discern and commune with God on a higher level. They have been born-again by the power of God. With maturity, they learn to walk by the Spirit.

The natural man or woman lives on the level of the soul. They are most likely still dead in sin or caught in sinful bondage. For them, everything is based on human reason or emotion. They are intellectual but void of Spirit life and truth. The Greek philosophers lived on this level. (See 1 Corinthians 1:18–31) This was most likely the condition of the people Paul was warning Timothy about in the above text.

By contrast, the carnal man or woman lives on the level of the flesh. They are driven by lusts, passions, or negative emotions like anger or greed. They live for fleshly indulgence. Their lives are filled with negative drama. (See Galatians 5:13-21) These people don't care about truth or reason. Their motto is "If it feels good... it is good ... so do it!" They are not able to connect personal actions to consequences.

I would argue that people can be Christians but still live on any of the three levels. Some people have accepted Jesus but live on the soulish or rational level. Our call is to renew the mind. This is a process. It takes time to replace secular deception with biblical truth. Godly wisdom is much higher than human wisdom. (See Isaiah 55:6-11)

Some sincere Christians are stuck in fleshly bondage. They need to come to freedom "in Christ" in order to progress toward maturity. The flesh and the spirit are locked in constant battle. (Galatians 5:13-21)

In some cases when dealing with people we need to return to the basics of the gospel and evangelism. They need to take the step of being born-again. In other cases we need to focus on discipleship. This involves bringing people to freedom "in Christ" and renewing the mind.

Tension and conflict will always be present when salvation or maturity are lacking. Paul was sending Timothy into a very difficult situation. Biblical values and wisdom do not mix with secular culture or carnality. This is the challenge of every church and Christian leader today. Every pastor is called to walk in Timothy's shoes.

The Purpose of the Law: 1 Timothy 1:8-11

“8) But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 9) realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers 10) and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, 11) according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.”

Paul reminds Timothy that the Law is good. It defines sin and serves as a basis of judgement. God gave the Law to put boundaries around human behavior.

The Law was not given as a basis of earning salvation or for fueling self-righteousness. Quite the opposite, the Law was given to show that all have sinned and need a Savior. The Law was given to define morals and ethics. It was given to show sinful people that they are lost and worthy of God's judgement.

Jesus Christ was sinless. He kept the Law completely. This qualified Him to be a substitute payment for sinful humanity. He died on the cross to redeem sinful people and to purchase our salvation. He became the only way for people to be reconciled to God.

Starting at salvation, the Holy Spirit begins changing people. According to verse 5, the goal of biblical instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. God's Law serves the basis of measuring godliness.

The Spirit of God writes the Law on the heart of redeemed people. He works from within and uses the gospel and sound teaching to transform people. The Law is the unchanging standard of good and bad behavior. It serves a good purpose.

The problem comes when religious people who are void of the Holy Spirit use the Law as a basis of legalism. They become like the judgmental Pharisees that condemned Jesus. It results in a heavy system of criticism rather than agape love. It becomes the basis of condemnation rather than grace.

Thus the Law serves an important purpose in evangelism and sharing the gospel. I do not need to condemn people because the Law serves the role of showing people they are lost and guilty before God. When people measure themselves by the Law, they come up short. The Law paves the way for the good news of the gospel. The Law opens the door for grace.

Testimony of The Glorious Gospel: 1 Timothy 1:11-14

“11) according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted. 12) I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, 13) even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a

violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; 14) and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.”

Notice that I tied verse 11 in with this context. Why? Because these verses are all about the glorious gospel. It is the message of forgiveness and a second chance in life. God is in the business of changing people.

Paul points out that he was previously an enemy of Jesus Christ and the gospel. He personally led the first deadly persecution against the church. Acts 7:58-8:3 indicates that Saul may have orchestrated the stoning of Stephen. He had many imprisoned and even put to death.

Paul points out that he was formerly a “blasphemer and persecutor and violent aggressor.” Yet in his past life he was very religious. (See Philippians 3:4-6) Religious people sometimes commit terrible atrocities.

His problem was that He did not personally know Jesus Christ. He was ignorant of the gospel and God's plan for human redemption. He knew the Law but nothing about grace.

When Jesus Christ called and saved him, everything changed. He became a new man filled with mercy, love, and grace – so much so that God put him into service. Saul became the beloved Apostle Paul.

God wants to work the same way in our lives. He wants to save us from our past sin and change us into new people. He wants to forgive us, cleanse us, change us, and give us a new life. This all starts with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

You know the story. God mightily worked through Paul. God filled him with the power of the Holy Spirit and used him to carry the gospel to many countries and plant many churches. God also used him to write much of the New Testament.

Do you have a conversion story? Have you become a new person in Jesus Christ? Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to produce fruit through you? This is the outworking of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

Chief Of All Sinners: 1 Timothy 1:15-16

“15) It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. 16) Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.”

Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. At one point Paul viewed his own religious efforts and self righteousness as sufficient to save himself. (See Philippians 3:4-6) Based on the righteousness according to the Law, he saw himself as blameless.

But when he met Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, the bright light that accompanied His glory blinded him. Saul suddenly came to grip with his wicked and utterly sinful heart. He saw himself as a wretched blasphemer and persecutor and violent oppressor. He was indeed the chief of all sinners. For the first time, he saw himself as hopelessly lost and in need of a Savior.

It was at that point that he cried out for the grace, mercy, and forgiveness of God. The glorious presence of Jesus Christ exposed his wicked heart and ways. He was guilty of sin and worthy of God's wrath.

His conversion and transformation shook the continent. In short order, he moved from being a critic and deadly persecutor of Christians to being the foremost evangelist of the gospel. He became a living demonstration of God's patience, love, and forgiveness.

Each of us has a similar story. Salvation starts the moment we humble ourselves and come face-to-face with our own sinfulness. We need to see ourselves as eternally lost and in need of God's grace and mercy.

It has been said that the ground is level at the foot of the cross. It is the place for lost sinners to bow before Jesus Christ and cry out for mercy and forgiveness. It is the place to forsake self righteousness and humbly embrace Jesus Christ.

It is not a place of comparison to others. It is a place of confession, contrition, and brokenness. It is a place for lost sinners to encounter God's mercy and grace. It is a place where we are all Chief Sinners. Confession and repentance from sin in light of the Gospel is the first and essential step of salvation.

Becoming God-Centered: 1 Timothy 1: 17

“15) It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. 17) Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Notice that I put verses 15 and 17 together. Paul was able to see himself as the chief of all sinners because he started comparing himself to the glorified Christ. Prior to that he measured himself by others and had an inflated view of himself. (See Philippians 3:4-6) He also had a terrible view of Jesus and persecuted His followers.

That all changed on the road to Damascus. (Acts 9:1-9) The light that blinded him physically helped him see Jesus in all of His Glory. God works in mysterious ways.

We are in constant need of the same reality check. We are weak, foolish, reckless, sinful, and frail compared to God. He alone is King! He is eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God. To Him alone belongs honor, glory, praise, and majesty forever and ever!

We suffer from being self-centered instead of Christ-centered. Society is broken because it is man-centered instead of God-centered. Mankind wants to be in control. We force God into our little boxes and treat Him like a genie to fulfill our whims.

We read the Bible through the lens of “good will” for man rather than for the glory of God! We are reading through the wrong lens. God does not exist for man’s sake, man exists for God’s sake. He is the potter and we are the clay.

People who read the Bible through humanistic lenses have problems with the God of the Bible. They have the roles reversed. They are judging God, rather than seeking to know Him. He is the Holy Judge and we are sinful mankind.

I believe Paul was encouraging Timothy in this text to radically change his perspective. He needed to see God as providential, sovereign, and majestic. He needed to take his eyes off from himself and focus on the glory and majesty of God!

We need to do the same thing. We need the attitude of John the Baptist; “He must increase but I must decrease.” (John 3:30)

The Good Fight: 1 Timothy 1:18-20

“18) This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, 19) keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. 20) Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.”

The specific charge or command entrusted to Timothy referred to in verse 18 most likely related to 1 Timothy 1:3-4. He was to remain in Ephesus in order to instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines or distort the gospel.

His appointment to this task was most likely confirmed by a prophetic utterance made about him during a public worship service. If so, it served to undergird his authority from the Lord as opposed to the false teachers. This public affirmation would prove helpful in the fight or battle that awaited him in carrying out his charge. It served as a public mantle of authority for the fight before him. It was akin to the affirmation God gave Moses and Aaron in Numbers 16-17 in the face of stiff opposition.

The phrase “fight the good fight” has in it the idea of “wage a good warfare.” Ministry is a warfare beyond mere Christian living. Those in leadership are a target of the enemy. Compare

Ephesians 6:10-17, 1 Corinthians 9:7, 2 Corinthians 10:4, 2 Timothy 2:3-4, and 2 Timothy 4:7. These verses are a sermon in themselves for those in leadership.

Those in leadership in the church are on the front lines of an active battle against both seen and unseen foes. They will most likely endure opposition, temptations, verbal attacks, slander, false accusations, persecution, spiritual oppression and demonic schemes. No wonder in 2 Timothy 2:3-4 Paul admonished Timothy to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Ministry is not a place for the weak or faint of heart.

The recourse is found in 1 Timothy 1:19; “keeping faith and a good conscience.” Faith is undoubtedly “the shield of faith” talked about in Ephesians 6:16 needed to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. Faith is the opposite of fear and anxiety. Faith is trusting God to do the fighting.

A good conscience is tied to moral purity. Those living a holy life are Teflon-coated against the assaults, accusations, and condemnation of the evil one. When these come – and they will – they do not stick. Innocence and sincerity are powerful defensive weapons. A clear conscience deflects many attacks and fortifies integrity.

Paul now gives a sober warning, those who reject faith and a good conscience end up shipwrecked. The picture is that of a wooden ship hitting a rocky reef in a storm and literally being torn apart.

When you read Acts 27:41-44, you discover that Paul was speaking from personal experience. He had been on a ship that was literally torn apart from hitting a reef. His two letters were warning Timothy that people in ministry who give way to deception, bitterness, sexually immorality, pride, or greed suffer tragic shipwreck. A modern example might be that they “crash and burn.”

Many modern examples of successful men and women in ministry suffering total shipwreck can be cited. In verse 20, Paul uses Hymenaeus and Alexander as examples. Hymenaeus is also mentioned in 2 Timothy 2:17. He had abandoned the truth and was teaching that the resurrection had already taken place. He and Philetus were upsetting the faith of many and their ungodliness was spreading like gangrene. This is a graphic example of the putrid poison of false teaching.

Alexander the coppersmith is mentioned in both Acts 19:33 and 2 Timothy 4:14-15. He was evidently Jewish but strongly opposed the gospel preached by Paul. He had done much harm to Paul. Timothy had to content with both of them.

We can conclude from these three verses that Timothy was entrusted with a difficult task. Paul was sending him into a tense battle and teaching him to fight the good fight. This sets the stage for the next paragraph in this amazing letter. Paul points him to intercessory prayer as his primary method and strategy.

Ministry 101: 1 Timothy 2:1-2

“1) First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2) for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

When reading these verses, it is important to keep the context in mind. Paul was writing to Timothy about his charge to stay in Ephesus to advance the gospel, help organize the church and combat many false teachers. It was a daunting task. So how was the young pastor to fulfill this charge?

As of first importance, Paul emphasized prayer and intercession. Prayer was his primary method and strategy for effective ministry. Why did he emphasize prayer as his top method for Christian living and ministry? Let's quickly examine the New Testament's focus on prayer.

Jesus built His earthly ministry on prayer. (Luke 5:15-16) The 120 early believers literally prayed in the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. (Acts 1:14) The early believers faced opposition and persecution through prayer. (Acts 4:29-31) The Apostles rearranged their entire ministry and schedule around prayer. (Acts 6:4) The leadership of the church in Antioch built the whole ministry on prayer and fasting. (Acts 13:2-3) Paul built his whole ministry on prayer. (Philippians 1:3-5; 1 Thessalonians 1:2) Paul taught prayer as the number one secret and strategy for ministry for every church and every leader he personally mentored. (Ephesians 6:18-20; Philippians 4:4-8; Colossians 4:2-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2; 1 Timothy 2:1-8)

I don't want to sound trite or redundant, but praying was the preoccupation of the early church leaders. Prayerless ministry is powerless ministry. Prayerless living is carnal living. Prayer is the fuel that powers the engine of Christian living and ministry. Prayer and communion with God is the doorway to walking in the Spirit.

We are invited to come boldly before the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16) Jesus as our great high priest is even now interceding on our behalf. (Romans 8:26-30) You will never walk in His sandals or share in His anointing apart from joining Him in intercession. Fruitful ministry was the overflow of His prayer life.

Let me paraphrase how Paul starts this section on prayer in 1 Timothy 1:1-8; “Timothy, as of first importance, your top priority, your primary ministry calling and focus... devote yourself to entreaties and prayer, making petitions with thanksgiving to God for everything and for all people, especially kings and those in authority.” Programs might help organize a church, but only prayer can breathe life into it. Ministry 101 as taught by Professor Paul was subtitled “Intercessory Prayer.”

Evangelistic Praying and Nation-Building: 1 Timothy 2:1-8

“1) First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2) for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. 3) This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4) who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

I call this “evangelistic praying.” It seems that Paul is urging Timothy to pray for the salvation of lost people, especially kings and those in civil authority. God wants people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. He urged that entities and prayer, petitions, and thanksgiving be made on behalf of lost people.

I must be honest, not all scholars share this opinion. I once heard a noted seminary professor speak on this text. He shared that the saying in this text was that “we might lead a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and dignity.” Being a declared Calvinist, he rejected the notion that we should waste time praying for lost people who may not be among the elect. He followed this up by saying, “We have no example in the Bible of praying for the salvation of lost people.”

Being an evangelist I strongly disagreed with his statement. I respectfully waited until after the service to privately question him about his statement. We had a great relationship. I politely asked him, “How does Romans 10:1 square with your statement that there is no record in the Bible of praying for the salvation of lost people?” He turned and started reading; “1) Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.” He suddenly became very sober and even perplexed. He then said, “I have honestly never noticed this verse before, let me get back to you.”

It must have been a long week for him as the Holy Spirit used this verse in his life. To his credit, the next Sunday he opened his message with a retraction. He said, “I must correct a wrong statement I made in last week's sermon, the Bible does indeed have an example of praying for the salvation of lost people.” He then went on to talk about the importance of honoring the Word of God above theological bias and when they disagree, you must yield to the authority of Scripture.

I love theology, but I am very careful not to make dogmatic statements based on theological bias. We can think logically to erroneous conclusions.

The Bible is full of mysteries that cast shadows on the dogma and conclusions of sincere and good theologians. I would rather wrestle with paradoxical tensions in Scripture than embrace erroneous conclusions that could dampen my walk with God. I try not to put parameters and boundaries around God not clearly defined in the Bible.

Another prime example is the erroneous belief that “God no longer does miracles today.” This conclusion is totally contrary to the witness of Scripture. Yet many Christians stuff God in that tiny box and the result is a mundane prayer life and dismal Christian walk.

The point remains, God wants praying to pave the way for preaching and sharing the gospel. He wants us to bind the strong man in prayer as we attempt to plunder his goods. (Matthew 12:29) He wants us to become skilled in using the weapons of our warfare to pull down strongholds as we seek to spread the knowledge of God. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

Paul begged Timothy to make intercessory prayer his number one method for spreading the gospel and doing ministry. I believe that concerted intercessory prayer can change the spiritual, social, and political landscape of nations and the world.

Revival and awakening will never come to a prayerless nation. (See 2 Chronicles 7:13-14) God calls His people to seek Him in humble and urgent prayer for lost people and wayward people and especially civil leaders. He wants us to pray and preach the gospel in the process of nation-building.

Prayer and Nation-Building: 1 Timothy 2:1-4

1) First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2) for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. 3) This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4) who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.”

I cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of praying for the salvation of kings and those in authority from this text. Paul was praying for their salvation and the resulting change in their administration of secular affairs.

According to Acts 9:15-16, Paul was to have a significant ministry to this mission field. The balance of the Book of Acts shows that he shared the gospel with many magistrates, governors, and people in government.

Actually, Daniel in the Old Testament is the best example of this powerful principle. His prayer life was exemplary. So was his influence on kings and political leaders. From Nebuchadnezzar to Darius, Daniel influenced kings and changed the course of nations through prayer. They turned to God and granted extraordinary favor to God's people.

Prayer, evangelism, and influencing nations go hand-in-hand. That is the inescapable conclusion of 1 Timothy 2:1-8. God desires lost people in positions of authority and influence to be saved and then grant favor to believers. That's how we come to lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

I cannot imagine the influence the church could have on secular leaders, towns, cities, states and nations if the church would take this Scripture seriously. Prayer is the fuel that drives God's work in our lives and the world.

Two Insights About God: 1 Timothy 2:3-4

“3) This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4) who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Paul now makes a profound observation about God. We should intercede for lost people for two reasons. First, because this kind of praying is good and acceptable in the sight of God. In other words, God wants us to pray for the salvation of lost people.

This kind of praying may include such things as softening their heart to the gospel, arranging circumstances in their life, bringing them in contact with other people to plant or water the gospel, binding the strong man who has them enslaved, cutting off evil influences and friends, exposing deceptive philosophies and thinking, rebuking the god of this world who wants to keep them blinded to the light of the gospel, and asking the Holy Spirit to bring conviction and openness to the gospel and actually convert them. These are some of the biblical prayer targets I use when interceding for lost people. Over the years I have witnessed God bring many hard and lost people to salvation.

Second, we should pray for lost people because God “desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.” I know this creates tension for some people, but it lines up with other Scriptures like 2 Peter 2:9 “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to the truth.”

The truth is that God loves the world and sent Jesus to die for the sins of all lost people. (John 3:16-17) I recognize Jesus Christ is “the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.” (1 John 2:2)

I acknowledge tension in some theological areas. There are paradoxical truths in the Bible that fit in the category of “mysteries.” One such example is the doctrine of Divine election and the doctrine of human free will. Both are taught in the Bible. I believe in both. I see them as balancing truths.

Therefore, I pray for the salvation of all lost people and sow the seeds of the gospel very abundantly while leaving the results with God. It is our job to preach the gospel and pray for lost people, it is the Holy Spirit's job to convert them. I see the doctrine of election as a guarantee of the harvest.

Though the Bible consistently credits God for the salvation of those who come to Christ, it never blames God for those who reject the Gospel and die in rebellion toward God. They are judged and held accountable for their own actions, rejection, and unbelief.

Our role as believers is to embrace and participate in the Great Commission. We are to abundantly share the gospel in the world and make disciples of those who respond. We are to

see ourselves as ambassadors for Christ and literally beg people to be reconciled to God. (see 2 Corinthians 5:20-21)

I believe the biggest wrestling match for the lost is waged in the prayer closet. The early apostles discovered that praying and preaching go hand in hand. (Acts 6:4) No wonder Paul admonished Timothy in this letter to make intercessory prayer his first method for doing ministry. Do not be negligent or slack in praying for the lost.

The Only Way To God: 1 Timothy 2:5-6

“5) For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6) who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.”

We now see the exclusive nature of the gospel. There is only one true God. The Bible presents Him as the Creator of heaven and earth and all life. He is the God who created mankind in His own image. This distinguishes Him from all false gods.

There is only one way into relationship with this God. Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. There is no other way of salvation. (Acts 4:12) He gave Himself as a ransom for all of mankind. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14:6)

The timing of His birth, public ministry, death, and resurrection was at the right time in human history. The Old Testament looked forward to Him. The four Gospels focused on Him. The rest of the New Testament looks back at Him and celebrates Him!

The gospel is His story. Salvation is for those who place faith in Him and thereby enter into a personal relationship with Him. He desires all men to be saved, but many will reject Him and die in unbelief.

Mobilize Men For Prayer: 1 Timothy 2:7-8

“7) For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. 8) Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.”

Paul was appointed as a preacher and an apostle primarily to the Gentiles. The word “apostle” literally means “sent out.” I liken it to the role of the missionary sent out to start new works among people who otherwise may not hear the gospel. He was a teacher in the way of faith and truth.

He had a huge charge entrusted to him, but look at his strategy. According to verse eight, he mobilized men for prayer. He wanted them to “pray, lifting up holy hands to God without wrath or dissension.” Let me try to unpack the meaning of this verse.

The idea of “holy hands” means “righteous or pure.” We could tie this to the goal of his instruction in 1 Timothy 1:5 of agape love “from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” It is the idea of someone in a sincere and right relationship with God. Hence James said; “... The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” (James 5:16b)

We now have to wrestle with the two qualifying words of “without wrath and dissension.” This comes down to our motive in praying. Our praying must not be motivated by anger or a negative mindset toward the person or subject for which we are praying. We need to pray in faith and not unbelief.

Have you noticed how nearly impossible it is for someone who doesn’t believe that miracles or healings happen today to pray “in faith” for a miracle or healing? I have seen people become irritable or even mad at the suggestion of anointing people with oil and praying for healing. They are not harmonizing in prayer, they are dissenting. Jesus found it nearly impossible to do miracles in some places because of their unbelief.

The prayer offered in faith in James 5:14-15 is simply agreeing with the omnipotence of God. It is the recognition and confession that all things are possible with God. It is asking God to do what we cannot. It is reliance on the power and compassion of God.

Acts 4:24-31 records men coming together for this kind of praying. Notice the emphasis in verse 24 that they were “lifting up their voices to God in one accord.” They were in agreement. The end result was earth-shaking.

Paul was instructing Timothy to bring men together for this kind of praying. This was the kind of praying that ushered in the Day of Pentecost. (See Acts 1:13-14) This was the kind of prayer the Apostles devoted themselves to continually in Acts 6:4. This was the kind of prayer meeting in Antioch that Barnabas and Saul were sent forth from on the first missionary trip. (See Acts 13:1-4)

In 1 Timothy 2:8, Paul was charging Timothy to start these kinds of prayer meetings every place he went. If the effective prayer of one righteous man can accomplish much, what can happen when many righteous men assemble to pray and seek God with one mind while emptied of self and focused on Jesus Christ and the leading and power of the Holy Spirit? This was both the strategy and fuel that powered ministry in the early church. God wants men to often mobilize for prayer.

Keep in mind, 1 Timothy 2:8 is the conclusion of the foundation Paul laid down in 1 Timothy 2:1-7. I believe this kind of praying is the missing ingredient in much of the modern church. I yearn for this kind of praying. I will drive far and stay long for this kind of prayer meeting.

Inner Beauty and the Glow of Godliness: 1 Timothy 2:9-10

“9) Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, 10) but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness.”

Paul now turns to a brief discussion about women. Notice, he starts with the word “likewise.” Just as he wanted men to lift up holy hands without wrath or dissension, so also he wanted Christian women to focus on inner character and virtue rather than outward worldly values.

Again, I see a direct connection back to 1 Timothy 1:5; “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and good conscience and sincere faith.” Paul wanted both men and women to focus on inward growth and virtue with the goal of personal godliness rather than focusing on external appearance or self-promotion.

It is natural for both men and women to be self-centered rather than Christ-centered. It is natural to focus on the outward rather than the inward. It is natural to glorify self rather than to glorify Christ. It is natural to promote self rather than promote Christ. It is natural to adorn the flesh and groom the body rather than become mighty in spirit and embrace godliness. It is natural to be attractive to draw attention to self rather than pointing people to Jesus. It is easy to look good outwardly, it is hard to be good and godly inwardly.

Paul was not saying that Christians should neglect their appearance or personal hygiene. He was simply saying that true beauty is inward and not outward. Hollywood is full of people who are handsome or beautiful outwardly, but inwardly are depressed, downcast, and morally depraved. They are very ugly inwardly and in short order it shows up outwardly as well.

God wants every Christian to place top priority on inward adornment. You can fake outward appearance and hide all kinds of blemishes with makeup; but you cannot cover up a sinful, bitter, or corrupt heart. The heart knows its own bitterness. At some point you need to face your true self.

The work of the Holy Spirit starts by transforming the inward heart. He doesn’t cover up sinfulness, He exposes it. He does a deep, thorough, and pure cleansing from the inside. He forgives the sin, heals the wounds, and makes people whole. He leads them to freedom.

This inner transformation soon shows up on the outward countenance. Like Moses, truly godly people begin to glow. God’s approach to beautification is totally different from the world’s.

This whole subject is an amazing study in Scripture. It is totally missed by those who claim Paul was being a male chauvinist in this text. Sadly, they miss what God is saying in these verses.

Women in Ministry: 1 Timothy 2. 9-15

“11) A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. 12) But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. 13) For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. 14) And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. 15) But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.”

When approaching this text, it is important to stand back and get the geographical and historical context. Timothy was left in Ephesus to deal with false teaching coming from men (1 Timothy 1:3-4) and to deal with spiritual warfare stemming from the city's immersion in paganism and the worship of the goddess Artemis. (See Acts 19:26-41) Her temple in Ephesus featured a special role for women who spoke as oracles. They were priestesses who spoke as mediums to give advice or prophecy from the goddess Artemis. The city was full of this kind of spiritism and the occult.

It is no wonder that Ephesians 6:10-20 was written to the church at Ephesus. This is the premier text in the New Testament on spiritual warfare. The city and the whole Greek empire was full of spiritism of every kind.

Notice that 1 Timothy 2:14 connects the vulnerability of Eve to Satan's deception. According to Genesis 3:16, one of Satan's schemes was to promote tension between women and men for dominance and authority. This battle was especially strong in the shadow of the Temple of the Greek goddess Artemis.

Women coming from this background in pagan spiritism in Ephesus and the surrounding regions were extra susceptible to deception, demonic influence, and the tendency toward prominence. Paul's solution was for “women to quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness” and to focus on inner virtues. According to 1 Timothy 2:12, he did not allow women to teach or exercise authority over a man.

Unfortunately, this text has been used in some Christian circles to totally silence women and exclude them from crucial ministry. The role of women in ministry is often misunderstood in the New Testament.

It must be noted that Philip the evangelist had four daughters who were recognized and renowned prophetesses. (See Acts 21:8-9) Also, Paul made no distinction with the distribution of spiritual gifts between men and women in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Many of these gifts are very public and intended to be used in public worship services, but there were boundaries.

My conclusion from the study of the full New Testament is that Paul was not preventing godly and mature women from ministry, but the biblical principle is that they are to be under authority and not the ones in authority.

Jesus has a huge and crucial role for women to be involved in ministry in and through His Church. The Holy Spirit is given to both men and women at the time of salvation equipping them to be fruitful in service. I believe in equipping, empowering and unleashing both men and women to be world changers in fulfilling the Great Commission.

The charge to Timothy who was serving the church in Ephesus was to muzzle both men and women who were not godly, mature, or biblically sound. Let's put it in perspective. Paul devoted all of Chapter One of 1 Timothy to exposing erroneous men who were false teachers in the church at Ephesus. By contrast, he only devoted seven verses at the end of Chapter Two for the discussion of women and pointing them to godly maturity.

Will the real problem please stand up! It's time for men to step up, become mature, biblically grounded, godly, and responsible. Paul was encouraging Timothy to raise up a generation of godly and mighty men. The same challenge faces the church today.

The Desire to Lead: 1 Timothy 1:3

"1) It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do."

One of Timothy's responsibilities was to appoint leadership over the church in Ephesus. Serving as an overseer is a huge task and great responsibility.

When considering church leaders, personal desire and godly qualifications must come together. Some may desire to be leaders but they are not qualified for various reasons. Others may be qualified but they have no desire to be a leader. Both must come together within a leader.

Some, like Peter, may warm up slowly to this calling. In John 21:15-17, Jesus had to beckon him three times to feed and care for His sheep. I am mindful that God is the one who puts leadership in place.

Others, like the false teachers in Ephesus, had an aspiration for leadership but were not qualified. (See 1 Timothy 1:6-20) It is as important to avoid bad leadership over the church as it is to find good leaders.

I believe leadership includes both gifting and calling. Paul makes this case in Ephesians 4:11-14. Yet, church leaders must work on personal growth and development. They need to continually hone their skills. It takes effort to move from good to great as a leader.

Every leader should be a reader and devote considerable time studying the subject of leadership, relational skills, and the art of communications. John Maxwell is a great author on this subject. I encourage every pastor and Christian leader to study his material.

The bottom line is that Christian leaders are servants of the people entrusted to them and not lords or masters. Jesus had much to say on this subject during His public ministry. Peter also addressed this style of leadership in 1 Peter 5:1-5.

So what are the biblical qualifications for leadership? Paul tackles that subject in the balance of this chapter.

Qualifications of an Overseer: 1 Timothy 3:2-7

“2) An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3) not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. 4) He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity 5) (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), 6) and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. 7) And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

The Apostle now turns to the qualifications of an overseer. This list can be broken into several parts. He instructs Timothy to look at his character, his marriage and family, his temperament and diligence, his leadership ability, his teaching and influence on others, his treatment of strangers, his stewardship and financial integrity, his maturity level as a Christian, his free from addictions and his reputation from those within the community. This is a thorough list that reflects balanced Christian virtue and maturity. Though every Christian man should aspire to this level of maturity and godliness, many are disqualified.

Let me touch on a few that stand out. First, being a Christian convert and maturing disciple of Jesus Christ is essential. This whole list is the outgrowth of a deep and intimate walk with God. Many churches have put men of influence into leadership who have no walk with God and lack godly wisdom and biblical understanding. This is a tragic mistake. How can a man lead others into a deep relationship with God when they themselves are shallow or given to worldly wisdom?

Second, he must be a man of moral and sexual freedom. Jesus, Paul, and Timothy were single and morally free. Others like Peter were married with fidelity and devotion to their one wife in keeping the marriage covenant. Matthew 19:1-12, 1 Corinthians 5-7 and 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 should all line up in the life of Christian leader.

Third, when it comes to character and Godly maturity, we might summarize by saying they display agape love and the fruit of the Spirit. Does their life reflect a walk with God? Is there ample evidence of the Spirit of God working in them and through them? Are they being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ? Are their children being positively influenced by Jesus Christ or are they showing signs of reacting to hypocrisy not seen in public?

Finally, does the man have a call or mantle from God in his life for advancing the kingdom of God? Is he concerned about the lost and given to disciple-making? Does he have the heart of Jesus for missions? Does he have a witness and positive influence for the glory of God among unbelievers?

It is a tragic mistake putting a man in leadership who has no experience or flame in his heart for missions. We could conclude from 1 Timothy 1:1-8 that his prayer life must have a fire for the lost.

Look at the example of Jesus in Matthew 10 and Luke 10. Every disciple Jesus made, He trained and sent on mission trips. This is where vision is formed, gifts are discovered, and the power of God is witnessed. How can a man oversee Christian ministry who has no experience with kingdom dynamics and knows nothing of the power of the gospel?

These are questions seldom asked about prospective leaders, but the context of the book of 1 Timothy and indeed the whole New Testament screams these truths. A Christian leader must be a man with a testimony of a transformed life because of his personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He must have a mature and growing walk with God. He should be a man of faith who is gifted and empowered by the Holy Spirit. He should display a positive marriage and family life that validates his testimony and walk with God. He should be a man who is bearing fruit for the glory of God.

Qualification of Deacons: 1 Timothy 3:8-13

“8) Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, 9) but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10) These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. 11) Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. 12) Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. 13) For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.”

The office of deacon originated in Acts 6:1-7 to help take the ministry load off from the Apostles. Verse 3 says they selected “seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.”

According to verse 13, “... they brought these before the apostles; and after praying they laid their hands on them.” Some see this as a form of ordination for this office. It was at the very least formal recognition of their gifts, calling, character, and appointment.

One of them was Stephen. He was full of grace and power and was performing wonders and signs among the people. (Acts 6:8) He preached with unusual wisdom and power. It is obvious that his ministry soon extended beyond waiting on tables. He also became the first Christian martyr. The heritage of this office quickly became important in the early church.

Sadly, Nicolas was also among this group. (See Acts 6:5) He eventually went astray into heresy and started a movement known as the Nicolaitans. (See Revelation 2:6 & 15) The influence of this heresy was evidently strong in Ephesus and Timothy was sent to counter its influence in the church. Many associate his movement with the counsel of Balaam in the book of Numbers that participated in idolatry and promoted immorality.

The qualifications presented by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 for deacons are very similar to that of an Overseer, with the exception that women are included in this office in verse 11. Deacons were to be mature men and women of godliness with a good reputation. The qualifications should be studied carefully before putting anyone in this office.

Some trip over the mention in verse 12 that deacons should be “husbands of one wife.” This they believe excluded women from this office. I disagree.

I see this as merely excluding polygamous men, which was common in both Jewish and Gentile cultures. The idea was if they were married, they had to be in a good monogamous marriage relationship holding to strict fidelity.

This was a direct counter to the teaching of the Nicolaitans which evidently embraced several forms of immorality including polygamy and concubines. This New Testament restriction was most likely anchored in the teaching of Jesus found in Matthew 19:1-12. As Christianity took root and spread, so did the standard of monogamous marriages.

To summarize, let me say that the early church had high standards for leadership. Both men and women had to demonstrate a godly and Spirit-filled life to serve as a deacon or deaconess.

I see the goal of disciple-making being the raising up of many fruitful leaders and Christian workers. Every effective church should be turning out a steady stream of gifted, experienced, and approved Christian workers and leaders.

The Mystery of the Church: 1 Timothy 3:14-15

“14) I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; 15) but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.”

Paul took seriously his apostleship and oversight of the churches he helped start. Though often absent in body he was present in spirit. He carried them in his bosom night and day. (See 2 Corinthians 11:28-29) He constantly prayed for them.

Though he did not stay long in one location, he made a constant circuit of ministering to both churches and those he disciplined in the faith. When his circumstances prevented his visits, he summoned a scribe or took the pen in hand and wrote them. His diligence to correspond in his

absence resulted in much of the New Testament being written. God used his delays to greatly advance the gospel.

Paul had a high view of the church in society. As verse 15 says, he viewed it as "... the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of truth."

The church is the pillar of truth in society. It has the role of opposing moral darkness and decay and proclaiming the light. While Satan and the world seeks to deceive, corrupt, and enslave, the church holds forth truth, forgiveness, and freedom through the gospel. It is no surprise that the gates of hell are aligned against the true church.

Though many churches have abandoned the faith and become liberal and secular institutions, Jesus watches over His bride. His church is a living organism. He promised to build His church in such a way that the gates of hell would not prevail against it. (See Matthew 16:17-19 & Ephesians 5:22-30)

Every believer should embark on a detailed study of the church in the New Testament. It is indeed the household of God. It is the pillar and support of truth. It is not made up of brick or mortar, it is made up of born-again believers. (See 1 Peter 2:4-5 & Ephesians 2:19-22) Jesus Himself is the head and we are His body.

I love Jesus and count it my highest privilege and honor to be part of His body. Few Christians understand or value the mystery of the church in the world. The Spirit of God has always been active through the true household of God in the world.

His true church cannot be defined or contained by denominations or human institutions. Though many man-made churches are dead, dysfunctional, and void of truth, His church is very alive, powerful, and active in the world. The Spirit of God is working in unprecedented ways in and through His Church today. I believe He is preparing His bride for His return.

The Mystery of Godliness: 1 Timothy 3:16

"By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory."

Every aspect of the life of Jesus Christ contributed to the gospel. This verse alludes to His pre-existence, His incarnation, His Deity, His sinlessness, the continual angelic interaction, and affirmation of every aspect of His life, the spread of the good news of His death, burial, and resurrection, and His ascension to heaven.

Each of these claims are worthy of a detailed book examining all of the supporting Scriptures. Jesus Christ is in a category all of His own. Let me try to introduce Him to You: He is the Uncaused Cause, the Creator of all things, the Sustainer, the Only Begotten Son of God, Higher

than the angels, Holy, Sinless, the Perfect Sacrifice, the Savior of the World, the Author of Salvation, the Son of Man, the Carpenter's Son, the Promised One of Israel, the Messiah, the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Door, the Bread of Life, the Living Water, the True Vine, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace, the Lamb of God, the Lion of Judah, the Groom and Head of the Church, the Living One, He Who is and Who was and is to Come, The First and the Last, The Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords!

That may have been a long sentence, but it's just a brief introduction of Jesus Christ – The Mystery of Godliness!

The End Time Apostasy: 1 Timothy 4:1-5

“1) But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2) by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, 3) men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. 4) For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; 5) for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.”

Caution: You are about to wrestle with some deep truth. Proceed only if you are not weak of heart or mind!

This chapter opens with a contrast and a warning. Note, “in the latter days some will fall away from the faith.” This is often called the apostasy. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 issues the same warning.

In the later times, many will claim to be Christians but will abandon biblical truth and live as they please in accordance with their own passions and desires. They will “fall away” from the truth.

Notice there will be two voices speaking. First will be the Spirit of God. He is often referred to as the Spirit of truth. (See John 14:16-18; 16:13) His role is to guide believers into all truth.

Second, Paul warns the later times will be accompanied by many deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. Like the serpent in Eden, they will twist the truth and distort the clear teaching of God's Word.

Jesus warned in John 8:44 that Satan is the father of lies. He seeks to lead people into bondage, corruption, and death. Colossians 2:8 issues the warning of being looted and led captive through philosophy and empty worldly deception rather than according to Christ. The enemy always uses lies and deceptions to promote his evil schemes.

Paul used a graphic word picture in verse 2 to illustrate how these deceitful spirits will work. They will use lies and deception like a hot branding iron to sear or burn the human conscience. It leaves the smell of flesh burning as a permanent scar is formed. The red hot branding iron was used to mark slaves in Paul's day.

But in this text it is not skin burning, it is the human conscience. They will no longer be able to distinguish good from bad, right from wrong or truth from lies. The inner guide of human conscience will be left hard, callused, and scared. As a result, people will become slaves to immoral passions.

Ephesians 4:17-19 documents the tail spin into the resulting callused condition and hard heart. Because of the constant bombardment of lies and deception, people will be given over to a futile mind. Their understanding will be darkened and their heart will become hard. Soon they will be given over to sensuality and embrace and defend every form of impurity. Romans 1:18-32 presents the same decline into human depravity but with more vivid step-by-step detail.

Paul then warns Timothy that there will be two immediate outcomes of the doctrines of demons. First, the sanctity of marriage as defined in the Bible will be abandoned. Instead of saving intimacy for the bonds of marriage between one man and one woman in covenant relationship with God, marriage will be replaced with open immorality of every kind. Society will be full of fornication, adultery, pornography, self-stimulation, incest, pedophilia, rape, homosexuality, bisexuality, lesbianism, sexual exploitation, orgies, prostitution, and human trafficking. (This is a compilation of numerous texts defining sexual sins in the New Testament.) Let me summarize: Paul was saying in the later times the institution of marriage will be under attack and the nuclear family will deteriorate.

But second, Paul notes that in later times the conclusions and designs of Creation will be distorted and changed. Romans 1:25 explains this phenomenon; "25) For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."

This will show up in the human diet, but the motivation behind certain diets is the issue in this text. For example, Hinduism excludes eating many animals because it worships them. Modern environmentalism abstains from numerous meats for similar reasons. It is influenced by evolution, naturalism, and the desire to be one with nature. This is also a form of worship.

Modern activists want to grant human rights to all animals because humans are merely part of the animal kingdom. This is the natural outcome of evolutionary thinking.

Therefore, the concluding logic is that eating meat is a kind of cannibalism. The problem is that the truth of a Creator is absent from the picture. Truth has been displaced by deception. As a result, human reason is distorted.

In some cases, the fines are now more severe for killing an animal than killing a human. If you doubt this, compare the penalties for stealing an eagle egg to aborting a human baby!

This text is not condemning a vegetarian diet so long as God is honored as Creator and Provider. Plants were given by God as a primary food source. They are very healthy. (See Genesis 1:29-31) Daniel and others were vegetarians, however they did not condemn others for eating meat. There is great latitude for personal diet in the Bible.

1 Corinthians 6:12-20 puts the hammer to the nail. It says that God designed everything for a purpose. Verse 13 says He designed the stomach for food and food for the stomach, but the human body was not designed for immorality, but for the Lord.

The modern lie is that people are primarily sexual creatures driven with animal-like instincts. The biblical truth is that people were created in the image of God to be spiritual beings and their bodies can become a temple of the Holy Spirit.

The humanistic lie is that people are free to indulge in the flesh and are excused if they lose control in the process. The biblical truth is that we should believe in Jesus Christ, walk in the Spirit, and live by the grace and power of God.

We are now living in the apostasy of the later times that Paul warned about. You and I have a choice. We can either embrace the lies and live in bondage with a seared conscience and moral defeat, or we can embrace Jesus Christ and biblical truth and live in freedom.

I know where I stand and why! You also have the freedom of choice. Either way, your basic life philosophy, personal identity, primary motivations, world view, key decisions, and life experiences will be radically affected. I point you to Jesus Christ, the Bible as the foundation of truth and a growing walk with God. But please take your life seriously. Don't join the apostasy by mindless default!

Harness the Power of Consistency Over Time: 1 Timothy 4:6-9

"6) In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. 7) But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; 8) for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9) It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance.

Paul now tackles the subject of personal discipline. He wanted Timothy to build his life and ministry around daily godly disciplines. Nothing is more important in any endeavor than daily consistency over time. It may start small but over time momentum builds like an avalanche. Soon it will become a mighty force and affect many things in its path.

Paul wanted Timothy to discipline himself for the purpose of godliness. A life of godliness is the result of daily disciplines we build into our life. I will expand on that in a moment.

But first we need to observe that there are two sides in this text to the coin of self-discipline. The first relates to the positive things we need to do every day. The second relates to negative or sinful habits we need to avoid or conquer on a daily basis. Learn to feed your spirit and starve your flesh daily. Why? Because both respond to the principle of consistency over time. You reap in your life what you sow on a daily basis. Starting today, assume responsibility for your own life!

So what are the positive things Paul wanted Timothy to build into his life. At the top of his list were spiritual priorities. He wanted him to set aside daily time for seeking God in prayer, studying the Word and laying the foundation of sound doctrine in his life. We can build this assumption on Acts 6:4. The Apostles “devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.”

I believe according to Ephesians 4:20-24 that Paul made the renewing of the mind his second priority. He taught people to take control of their thinking. They needed to sort out truth from deception. They needed to build positive attitudes and emotions into their life. They needed to feed faith and starve doubt. They needed to convert the soul and work on positive mental health.

As you read all of Paul's writings you soon discover that good nutrition and physical fitness also ranked high on his list. Don't mistake 1 Timothy 4:8 as Paul saying he did not value physical fitness. He was merely putting it below daily spirit and soul priorities. A casual reading of 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 undergirds this point. Many Christians don't do well spiritually because they are not taking proper care of the body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Paul also put learning positive relational skills (Philippians 2:1-11), developing a good work ethic (Ephesians 4:28) and financial stewardship (2 Corinthians 8) among his personal disciplines. He emphasized intentional daily personal growth and development in all the above areas of his life.

On the opposite side of the coin, he instructed people to put off the old self. Don't make the mistake of trying to put on the new without putting off the old. (Compare Ephesians 4:17-32 with Colossians 3:1-17) Positive disciplines and negative habits have a way of neutralizing each other. The spirit and the flesh are in constant tension. (Galatians 5:16-24)

Notice in 1 Timothy 4:6-7, Paul told Timothy to build on sound doctrine while avoiding worldly fables. Let me be candid: You will never come to godliness by just reading your Bible and praying a few minutes every day if you spend most of your time surfing the internet, watching Hollywood smut, reading romance novels, dabbling in pornography, and living in an immoral relationship. Stop fooling yourself! Your struggles in your walk with God are your own making. An undisciplined life is a wasted life.

Paul was telling Timothy to take control of his own life. If you want to be a fruitful Christian and effective leader, then start building your daily life around godly disciplines. Harness the principle of daily consistency over time in your life. Lay the groundwork for an avalanche of godly momentum in your life. Forget the past and start sowing the daily seeds for a new life and future.

Setting Personal Priorities: 1 Timothy 4:7-10

“7) ... On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; 8) for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9) It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. 10) For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.”

We now have a great text for helping us prioritize our lives. When setting up personal disciplines, place top priority on those things that lead to godliness.

Paul concludes that bodily disciplines are good and yield some benefits in this life, but godliness is profitable for all things. Building your daily walk with God has a double return. It has great benefits in this life and in the life to come.

This is comparable to Jesus in the sermon on the Mount saying; ““19) Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20) But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; 21) for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21) Don’t consume all your time, energy and resources on the here and now. This life is short, but eternity is forever. Invest in eternity.

Paul concludes in verse 10 by saying we should labor and strive with our hope fixed on God. Don’t make the mistake of being so self-absorbed that you have no time or thought for serving God and others. Being self-centered is a dead end road.

It’s Not About A Person’s Age: 1 Timothy 4:12

“12) Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.”

Physical age has nothing to do with maturity, character, godliness, or gifting. Paul told Timothy not to let anyone despise his youthfulness. His speech, conduct, love, faith, and moral purity were to be exemplary.

It all comes down to the depth of a person’s walk with God. The Holy Spirit is not limited from working through young or old, rich or poor, male or female, or ethnic background. Joseph, Daniel, and Timothy were young when God started using them in great ways.

By contrast, Abraham was close to one hundred when he finally had the faith to give birth to Isaac. Moses was eighty when he stood before the burning bush. Some believe the Apostle John was in his nineties when he wrote the book of Revelation.

Danial was faithful and fruitful for God his entire life. He built a daily walk with God that spanned many decades. So was Anna. She was an aged widow and prophetess on fire for God in the temple with fasting and prayers night and day past age eighty-four. (See Luke 2:36-38) She was a fireball for the glory of God.

We need to reprogram our thinking. Fruitfulness is not tied to age. It is tied to the depth and sincerity of a walk with God and the corresponding anointing of the Holy Spirit in the person's life in the "Now!"

I have watched people who were young and on fire for God have their flame go out. I have also seen people who have been on the side lines their entire life suddenly turn to God and burn with passion, power, and great fruitfulness.

The point Paul was making to Timothy was that physical age has nothing to do with ministry potential or fruitfulness. God can work equally as powerful through young or old. Age doesn't matter. It's not a person's age that counts, rather it's the depth and sincerity of a person's walk with God!

In the case of Balaam, God spoke through a donkey. Jonah is an example of God doing great things through a very reluctant and stubborn prophet. This underlines the fact that God and not the person is the ultimate source for all effective ministry. But when the human agent is in synchronism with God and anointed by the Holy Spirit, unfathomable things can happen.

The implication of this verse is that your past performance does not determine your present fruitfulness. By the time Paul wrote 2 Timothy, the fire in Timothy was growing dim. As mentioned earlier, Moses didn't acquire the fire until he was eighty.

Walking in the power of the Holy Spirit is a "Now" phenomenon. Godliness is a daily pursuit. Past failure can bring future fruitfulness, just like past successes can lead to pride, arrogance, and a time of wandering from God. It is your "Now" walk with God that matters!

So let me ask you a few questions: Is your fire burning "Now?" Are you walking in the power of the Holy Spirit "Now?" Is your time in the Word and in the prayer closet effective "Now?" Are you being faithful in season and out of season "Now?" Are you setting your mind on things above "Now?" Are your priorities right "Now?" Are you storing up treasures in heaven "Now?"

I'm not interested in your past biography or some future dream, I want to hear and see current events of what God is doing in your life right "Now!" Are you on fire for the glory of God "Now?"

The Importance of Biblical Literacy: 1 Timothy 4:13

“Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.”

This is an insightful verse. It fills in the balance from 1 Timothy 2:1-8 that dealt with the priority of prayer. Now Paul is telling Timothy to also place a priority on the ministry of the Word. This means that early churches took Acts 6:4 seriously. They “devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.” Just as praise, prayer and worship go together, so now we see the public reading of Scripture, exhortation, (preaching) and teaching go together.

Prior to the invention of the printing press, the Bible was not readily available to people. Books of any kind were rare. As a result, most people were illiterate. Learning of any kind, both secular and sacred, took place in public gatherings devoted to drama and oratory.

Jewish homes featured better education because of homeschooling. Christianity adopted the Jewish model. Note the emphasis in 2 Timothy 1:5 and 3:14-15 of Timothy’s mother and grandmother teaching him the sacred writings from childhood. As was common among Jewish people, they were both literate and educated in Scripture.

As the gospel spread to gentile regions, so did the need for “the public reading of Scripture, for exhortation and teaching.” It seems from Acts 2:42-47 that the early Christians met daily for the reading of Scripture, teaching, and prayer.

The same holds true in many third world countries today where poverty and illiteracy are prevalent. We work with some pastors in India, parts of Africa, and tribal regions of South America who cannot read. They have developed a system of meeting during the week for Bible reading and teaching in preparation for their weekend preaching and teaching in their own churches. They are amazing audible learners and many are gifted orators.

This is part of the reason why pastor conferences are in high demand in these regions. It is also the fuel behind Christian schools in these areas. In many places adults attend literacy classes.

Lest you celebrate the high literacy level in many developed countries, it is sad to acknowledge that biblical illiteracy is very prevalent within many secular and communist countries. Yet history supports the phenomenon of Biblical literacy and the spread of biblical Christianity does more to bring blessing, righteousness, and prosperity to a nation than any other factor. When taken seriously with much reading of Scripture built into the education system, it shapes the moral conscience of a nation.

How much more the fiber of a church. Few things distinguish an on-fire and Spirit-filled church more than the priority it places on prayer and the ministry of the Word. This ensures that God and not man is the center and focus of the church.

Discover and Develop Your Gifts and Talents: 1 Timothy 4:14

“14) Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.”

This is a profound verse. It behooves every Christian to develop their spiritual gifts and talents. Be willing to be bad on your way to being good and great. Just step up and step out and start doing something.

Some things you try will never become your joy or passion. That's ok, move on to other things. Eventually you will discover your calling. When you do, fruit will begin to emerge almost effortlessly.

Every Christian is given one or more spiritual gifts. Don't neglect your gifts and don't be shy about developing your natural talents. I believe God can give more gifts as need arises and occasion may require.

My greatest admonition is to step off the sidelines and onto the playing field. Don't bury your gifts or talents. Gifts become better over time. Passion is discovered and deepened as you come face-to-face with crisis and need. Don't live a sheltered or safe life.

I encourage you to follow the example of Timothy and have godly leaders lay hands on you and pray for more anointing, gifting, and power. I've been prayed over many times. Others may see in you potential you do not see in yourself.

How do you know when you find your sweet spot? You will become fruitful. God will bless your efforts. Others will begin to respond with affirmation. Fear will be replaced by joy. You will experience inner promptings to step out and do more. Follow that inner voice.

Give God Your Best: 1 Timothy 4:14-16

“14) Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was granted to you through words of prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. 15) Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. 16) Pay close attention to yourself and to the teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

It's sad to see the way some Christians coast or drift along with no thought of self-discipline or diligence. The same is true for many in ministry. These verses run very contrary to that mindset.

If you doubt that God wants those in ministry to work hard, consider the following four phrases from these verses: “Do not neglect”, “Take pains with”, “Be absorbed in”; “Pay close attention to” ... yourself and your teaching. Paul was telling Timothy to apply himself diligently to fulfilling his calling.

Paul took both divine providence and human responsibility seriously. Saint Augustine addressed this paradox by saying, “Pray as if it all depends on God; work as if it all depends on man.” I believe Saint Augustine got it right. He lived between 354-430 AD. His quote reflected the theology of the early church.

My personal motto at GoServ Global is that “it’s our job to tell the story, it’s God’s job to move the mountain.” Biblically, I see that God and His people frequently work together in tandem. Paul saw himself as a co-laborer with Christ.

God certainly does not need man to accomplish anything He desires. At the same time, He empowers His people with the Holy Spirit and Spiritual gifts to qualify them for His service. It is a joy, privilege, and honor to be a servant of God. It is fully understandable that God would want us to give Him our best effort.

The Family Model for Ministry: 1 Timothy 5:1-2

“1) Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, and to the younger men as brothers, 2) to the older women as mothers, and to the younger women as sisters, in all purity.”

There seems to be four cornerstones to effective ministry. So far, Paul has talked about good character, effective praying, and solid biblical teaching and preaching. But there is a fourth that is often overlooked. An effective leader must also develop positive people skills.

Ministry by nature is highly relational. It’s about meeting the needs of people and encouraging them in their walk with God. In these two verses, Paul instructs Timothy on developing positive people skills in four key relationships. Keep in mind, Timothy was a young single man. He had to earn credibility while guarding his purity.

First, he wanted him to show respect to older men. He was to address them appropriately as a father and avoid rebukes. Respectful words are important.

Second, he was to treat younger men as brothers. He was to form brotherly relational connections with them.

Third, he was to treat older women as mothers. Again, we see a relationship of respect with positive affinity. Kind words are important.

Finally, he was to treat younger women as sisters in all purity. He was to protect emotional and moral boundaries in such a way as to avoid temptations.

When these two verses are viewed as a whole, they paint a family portrait. The New Testament talks much about the family of God.

As society breaks down, God intends for the local church to become family for many people. It should provide both spiritual and emotional support for people. A strong family-like bond should develop between people within the church.

This family relational model was Paul's personal approach to ministry. If you doubt his family approach to ministry, review 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 for a few minutes. He bonded to people under his care like a mother to her new born baby and a father to his beloved children.

Let me emphasize what Paul was saying in these verses. People need love, acceptance, affirmation, encouragement, and direction. They need to be nurtured and not merely instructed. People need relational connection. This is the place where maximum growth and ministry takes place.

Value the family bonds that can form within a local church. Learn to be relational. Don't be afraid to connect with people. There are risks but also huge rewards. God did not create us to be Lone Rangers.

Becoming Family to Those Without Family: 1 Timothy 5:3-16

"3) Honor widows who are actually widows; 4) but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to show proper respect for their own family and to give back compensation to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God. 5) Now she who is actually a widow and has been left alone has set her hope on God, and she continues in requests and prayers night and day. 6) But she who indulges herself in luxury is dead, even while she lives. 7) Give these instructions as well, so that they may be above reproach. 8) But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

Paul now begins a long section on the care of widows. The subject actually covers verses 3 through verse 16. This was an important issue in the early church.

Death came early for many in those days. Some died from sickness, disease, and plagues. Others died from famine, accidents, violence, or war. Many early Christians also lost homes and belongings from persecution and became refugees. Many were martyred.

The early church practiced Christian community in ways unknown by the modern church. How did they do it? They became family to those without families.

A quick review of Acts 6:1 shows that the Apostles took the care of widows very seriously. It might be noted that when Jesus was dying on the cross, He handed the care of His own widowed mother into the hands of John. (See John 19:25-27) He immediately took her into his own home and made her part of his family. This gesture set the tone for the early church.

There was no such thing as retirement funds, social security, or nursing homes in those days. In fact, they are absent in many countries today. The American way is not the biblical way. God has a better plan to show value and dignity to people.

As we see from Paul's writing to Timothy, extended family was responsible to care for widows who had no other means of sustenance. Family should take care of family. Well meaning government programs are often a very empty substitute for a sincere and loving family.

It appears from 1 Timothy 5:9 & 11 that they kept a formal list of widows who were cared for by the church. Some conclude from this that New Testament local churches actually kept some form of membership.

James 1:27 presents the case that both widows and orphans were officially under the care of the church body. History shows that the early church took this calling seriously. The early church was known for its care of widows, orphans, foreigners, and the poor. This was a natural manifestation of agape love. Let me stress it again: "They became family to those without family."

But notice that 1 Timothy 5:5 sets a high standard of qualification for widows, not unlike the deaconesses. "5) Now she who is actually a widow and has been left alone has set her hope on God, and she continues in requests and prayers night and day."

This is very reminiscent of Luke 2:36-38 that shows how highly regarded godly widows like Anna were in Israel. Godly widows most likely became pillars in the early church and possibly helped with the care and education of orphans. I suspect both widows and orphans were invited to become part of families in the church.

The balance of this text in 1 Timothy 5:3-16 deals with younger widows. Paul encouraged them to marry again, bear children, and establish households. (See verses 11-16) This was in no way degrading to women, but rather stressed the value of motherhood and the importance of family in the early church. Strong churches are built on strong families.

A very simple understanding of Christian Ministry might be to "become family to those without family." Modern culture is starved for family love, encouragement, and nurture. This is a very rewarding and fruitful ministry.

We have always practiced an open home policy at the Baxter house for meals, holidays, and often lodging. God has used this to make us rich in friendships and many have come to Jesus through simple hospitality.

Many of our natural kids who are married have carried on this tradition. People today are starved for family love, affirmation, and values. Becoming family to those without family puts Agape love and the gospel in shoe leather like nothing else.

Compensation for Hard-Working Spiritual Leaders: 1 Timothy 5:17-18

“17) The elders who lead well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. 18) For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle the ox while it is threshing,” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.””

It is imperative that you give double honor to elders who rule well. This is especially true for those who work hard at preaching and teaching. I believe the double honor includes both respect and adequate financial support.

Both here and in 1 Corinthians 9:7-14 Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 25:4. The Old Testament text relates to not muzzling the ox while threshing. If you want it to work hard you need to feed it well.

The underlying parallel is that ministry is hard work. Preaching the Word and shepherding people is a full-time job. I recognize that Paul was willing to make tents while planting a church, but as soon as the church started thriving, he devoted full attention to the ministry.

The old idiom is true: “You get what you pay for!” When pastors are distracted earning personal support, time in prayer and the Word are cut short. It shows up in shallow and unprepared preaching and teaching. The unction to preach with power and anointing is often missing. This is fueled by much time in prayer.

We often see this in remote and tribal areas where pastors are working all day at other jobs just to make ends meet. It shows up quickly in shallow and often erroneous preaching. Soon the church begins to suffer. The laborer is worthy of his support.

Holding Christian Leaders to a High Standard: 1 Timothy 5:19-20

“19) Do not accept an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. 20) Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.”

There are people who falsely accuse leaders for various reasons. Some are motivated by jealousy and others by evil intent. Recognizing this, Paul adopted the Old Testament standard of requiring two or three witnesses to collaborate every detail. This could be applied two ways.

First, there could be two or three witnesses of the same sinful event such as stealing or fraud. Second, it could be two or three witnesses of the same kind of character flaw such as lying, anger, or sexual indiscretions. Either were sufficient cause to investigate a matter. Why? Because character is important. Either scenario would show that the elder failed the test from 1 Timothy 3:2 of being above reproach.

Keep in mind, Satan is the accuser of the brethren. He works to discredit good leaders. False accusations can be very damaging. Even Jesus had many critics. These standards were intended to protect good people.

On the other hand, there are bad people who long to be in positions of influence and power. Satan strategically tries putting a “Judas” on church boards or in pastoral roles. This charge to Timothy was intended to both protect the innocent and expose the wicked.

According to verse 20, when sinful leaders are exposed, they are to be rebuked in the presence of all, especially if they continue in their sinful ways. This public rebuke will serve as a warning to others. It will be a sober reminder that sin is not tolerated among God's people.

When I read these verses, I am reminded of Acts 5:1-11 and the story of Ananias and Sapphira. They aspired for leadership but they were full of greed and deceit. The Holy Spirit exposed them and judged them with instant death. Acts 5:11 says; “And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard these things.”

Leaders are to be held to a higher standard. They pave the way for godly living and righteousness. When they live sincere and holy lives, the cause of God is advanced. The opposite is also true. When leaders compromise, the cause of Christ and the gospel are negatively affected.

To establish this principle, read the story of the kings. When evil kings ruled over Judah or Israel in the Old Testament, the whole nation drifted into sinful living and unrighteousness. So also, righteous kings often brought revival and reform.

The morals and sincere holiness of leadership in the church are important. They can bring light or darkness to the cause of Christ. They can advance the cause of Christ or set Christianity on a downward course within society.

Restoring Pretenders to Fellowship with God: 1 Timothy 5:21

“21) I solemnly exhort you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.”

The witnesses Paul calls for this charge to Timothy is very similar to the one he gave him to preach the Word in 2 Timothy 4:1. He was addressing very serious matters. The way we preach and teach the Word of God will affect eternity for many people.

So also, the way we expose sinful living and deal with compromise among God's people will affect the spiritual fire in fellow Christians and in the church. Notice in 1 Timothy 5:21 Paul was charging Timothy “in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ and of His chosen angels.” He was addressing something very serious.

Pretenders can fake it with people, but they cannot fake it with this group of witnesses. God does not ignore sin in the lives of His people no matter who the culprit may be. He did not ignore sin in the lives of Eli the Priest and his sons. He did not ignore the anger of Moses when he struck the rock. He did not let David get away with his sin with Bathsheba. John the Baptist did not ignore the immorality of King Herod who was married to his brother's wife. Being king did not exempt him from the righteousness of God. There is no partiality with God when it comes to sin and compromise.

According to 1 John 1:5-7; God is light! He is absolutely holy. Sin always interrupts fellowship with God. So also sincere and godly living enhances sweet fellowship with God.

Paul wanted Timothy to be unbiased in the way he exposed and renounced sinful living. Why? Because according to 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 sin is infectious. It spreads like leaven in a lump of dough. Sin is like an infectious disease. Sin is like deadly cancer cells in the human body. Sin is a killer.

When sin and compromise are ignored because of favor or status granted to some people in leadership, it will quickly infect others. But even worse, it will quench the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 4:29-30) God's presence and blessing can be lost by a person, family, church, and nation that defiantly embraces sin and compromise while holding a stiff arm toward God. No person, church, family, or nation can thwart the justice of God.

Are you in sweet fellowship with Jesus Christ right now or are you in the shoes of a pretender? You may be a Christian, but you are inwardly living like a prodigal. You are going through religious motions, but you are empty.

Confession and repentance are the only cure for a cold, calloused, and self deceived heart. They go hand in hand. You cannot pretend with Jesus Christ. He knows the condition of your heart. Don't fool yourself into thinking you can get away with hidden sin. You are not exempt from the call to holiness. (1 Peter 1:13-25)

Be honest with yourself. If sin has gained ground in your life, deal with it quickly, honestly, and completely. Confess and repent so you can run back into the arms of your loving Heavenly Father.

Revival tarries only because God's people refuse to humble themselves and turn from what God calls "wicked ways." 2 Chronicles 7:14 is as valid today as when God spoke to Solomon. Is the Holy Spirit calling you to stop pretending and deal with your sin?

But Paul was instructing Timothy to also deal with others around him. He wanted him to lead others to freedom from sin and bondage. If you have a friend who has been taken in a trespass, go to them in humility and seek to restore them to fellowship with God. (See Galatians 6:1) Be a fire watcher like Paul was for Timothy. Don't let sin extinguish the fire in others.

The Mantle of Ordination: 1 Timothy 5:22

“22) Do not lay hands upon anyone too quickly and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.”

Paul now advised Timothy to do diligence in checking out the character and background of prospective leaders before putting them in office. Churches have made tragic mistakes by appointing leaders too quickly. 1 Timothy 3:1-13 must be taken seriously.

Many insurance companies now require background checks for anyone working with minors. Sexual predators volunteer readily for nursery or children's ministry positions. If problems develop, the church is responsible.

The same holds true for any leadership position. Beware of people with anger issues, greed, lusts, and people who are power-hungry. Do they have a history of interpersonal relationship problems? Do they work well with others? How do they respond to authority?

Be sure they have a solid testimony of salvation and display the fruit of a changed life. Measure them by Acts 6:3. Make sure they are “men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom.”

Learn to ask direct questions. Ask about struggles with chemical dependency or pornography. Get character references and check them out. Humility and transparency are good qualities. Honesty is essential.

Look into their personal stewardship and make sure they are honoring God with their giving and current with all obligations. Unfortunately, pastors have a terrible rating in the financial world for debt and default on loans. If they aren't faithful with their money, their word often cannot be trusted in other areas either.

Also check out their business dealings and reputation with outsiders. Unfortunately, the spread of the gospel can be hindered by people in leadership who have poor reputations within the community.

This list is a culmination of many scriptures. Note, you need to do your research before putting them in office. If you find an area of sin or compromise, take time for mentoring and discipleship before entrusting them with authority over the church. Jesus prayed all night before appointing the twelve Apostles, and one of them turned out to be a traitor.

Don't lay hands on people too quickly. This may be a reference to ordination. Paul took time mentoring Timothy before laying hands on him. The mantle of ordination is difficult and messy to revoke. Removing someone from leadership often has negative fallout, but sometimes has to be done!

The Value of Medical Missions 1 Timothy 5:23

“Do not go on drinking only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.”

This verse written to Timothy is significant for several reasons. First, it shows that Paul recognized the value of natural cures for some common health issues. Timothy struggled with stomach problems. It was possible that Luke the beloved physician was with Paul at this time of this writing and recommended wine.

Pure water was at a premium in those days. As Timothy traveled, he may have been exposed to new bacteria in the drinking water. The cure was to mix in a little wine or alcohol with the water. It is an effective treatment for numerous stomach ailments.

Second, note that the story of the Good Samaritan also recognized the value of wine as an antibacterial to treat wounds. (See Luke 10:34) He added wine and oil to the wounds to ward off infection.

Third, though Paul obviously believed in divine healing, being a Christian did not exempt the early believers from every form of sickness or disease. Paul rejected a health, wealth, and prosperity doctrine. Christian's live in a fallen world that includes sickness, disease, accidents, war, violence, persecution, and suffering.

Fourth, Christianity has a rich history of taking care of the medical needs of people. When plagues would come upon cities or villages, often most of the healthy population would leave, abandoning the sick and dying to fate. It was the Christians who would stay behind and minister to the sick. They did the same in war-torn regions. Showing care and compassion for the sick, wounded and elderly became an effective means of spreading the gospel.

Fifth, caring for the sick and infirmed soon became as essential for the spread of the gospel as caring for widows and orphans. James 5:13-18 indicates that this was accompanied by an effective prayer ministry. Medical Missions have gone hand-in-hand with the spread of the gospel throughout church history.

Finally, this is a primary reason why GoServ Global believes in building Medical Centers in remote regions around the world. Raising funds for medical centers is an on-going process at GoServ. While churches, orphanages and Christian schools are frequent targets for intense persecution in some parts of the world, Christian medical centers often experience much greater freedom.

Call our office at 515-448-3131 if you want to help support these miracles. Medical centers are an effective way to spread the gospel.

The Great Equalizer: 1 Timothy 5:24-25

“24) The sins of some people are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their sins follow after. 25) Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed.”

Paul made it clear in these two verses that the fruit of our actions will catch up with us. The sins of the wicked will catch up with them. So also, the good deeds of the righteous will not be hidden.

Jesus said every tree is known by its fruit. (Matthew 7:16-20) Bad trees produce bad fruit and good trees produce good fruit. Galatians 6:7-10 puts forth the law of the sower. You reap in life exactly what you sow.

The warning for the wicked is to turn from their sinful ways, while the righteous need to be patient and consistent in doing good. The harvest will come.

I take great encouragement in these verses. They show that spiritual laws are as real as the laws of physics. Our actions will catch up with us. I have watched this work out over time in many people's lives.

Many will try to beat the system in this life, but a judgement day is coming. All things will be revealed. The Judge will get it right! God is the great equalizer.

Culture-Changing Power of the Gospel: 1 Timothy 6:1-2

“1) All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against. 2) Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brothers or sisters, but must serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles.”

As Christianity spread in the Roman Empire, it eventually brought an end to numerous practices, including slavery. The book of Philemon is an example of the culture changing power of the Gospel in process.

These verses to Timothy capture two scenarios in this process. First, there were slaves who became Christians and needed to conduct themselves with godly character. Some had non-Christian masters and others had masters that became Christians. The latter were instructed to not take advantage of this situation.

Keep in mind, many slaves were indentured servants. They were working off debt or completing the terms of an internship. Becoming a Christian does not invalidate civil obligations. Personal debt is a great example. But Jesus Christ does change our attitude and work ethic.

Second, as Christianity spread, some slave masters became Christians. This radically impacted the way they were to treat their slaves or servants. They had to treat them as brethren and show Christian virtue.

As mentioned earlier, Christianity eventually brought an end to the institution of slavery. The gospel should change human culture. It should also change the way Christian employers treat employees. The gospel should show up in every human relationship for the Christian. The gospel has the power to change human culture.

Becoming a Discerning People-Sorter: 1 Timothy 6:3-5

“3) If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, 4) he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a sick craving for controversial questions and disputes about words, from which come envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, 5) and constant friction between people of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.”

It is sad to say, but some people are stuck in life and have no desire to grow or change. Others want to do nothing but argue, debate, cause friction, and waste time. Some hang around Christian circles as a place to prospect for business deals.

Paul was warning Timothy not to waste his time, energy, or resources on the wrong people. This may sound strange, but in these verses, Paul was instructing Timothy to be a “People-Sorter.”

When it comes to evangelism and the Great Commission, we need to have our eyes open for divine appointments. It is important to trust the Holy Spirit to send sincere and seeking people across your path. We are to share the gospel abundantly with all people, but invest our time and resources in those who show signs of sincere growth. In this respect, you need to become a discerning “People-Sorter.”

Again in 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul instructed Timothy to pour himself into building faithful men who would be able to teach and mentor others. He didn’t want him to spin wheels with those who were resisting the work of the Holy Spirit in their life. He wanted him to be intentional about pouring himself into fruitful and productive relationships. Again, he was teaching Timothy to be a “People-Sorter.”

Be alert to distractions Satan sends into your life. They come in many forms including people with wrong motives or anti-gospel intentions. In this text, Paul was warning Timothy to avoid these people. Becoming a wise and discerning “People-Sorter” is a hard lesson to learn, but without some understanding of this concept you will waste untold time, energy, emotions, and resources on the wrong people.

Here are some practical points on how to maximize your encounters with people. Ironically, this means you will have to minimize your time with the wrong people.

First, identify the time and energy-drainers in your life. Avoid people who do nothing but spread negative attitudes, argue, or cause friction. Be alert to people Satan wants to plant in your life to drain your emotions, time, energy, and resources. He sends people with the intention of dragging you down and wasting your life. Knowing how to avoid the wrong people is the primary focus of 1 Timothy 6:3-5.

Second, look for people who naturally encourage, motivate, and challenge you in your walk with Jesus Christ. These are most likely the iron sharpening friendships God wants to send for your growth and progress. These are premium relationships.

Third, look for those who are following in your wake and responding to your ministry and influence. These might be people God wants you to mentor and disciple. Be intentional about speaking into their life for the glory of God. This is where you may want to focus your intentional discipleship efforts.

Finally, do as Jesus did and have tighter and tighter circles of more productive relationships. He spent time with crowds, but poured Himself into the 120, the 70, the 12, and the 3. These were the leaders He groomed to take up the mantle in His absence. He was the Master Disciple Maker. Follow in His steps.

If you embrace these four points, they will help you focus your time and prioritize your relationships with people. Pray seriously about each category. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where He wants to place the various people in your life. Don't be reckless with your relationships! Be discerning and intentional about influencing others for the glory of God.

When approached prayerfully, being a discerning "People-Sorter" can have a profound impact on your life. It will undoubtedly realign many of your relationships and bring more focus into the way you spend your time, resources, talents, and gifts for the glory of God.

The Gain of Godliness! 1 Timothy 6:6-8

"6) But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. 7) For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it, either. 8) And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content."

I believe in the "Gain of Godliness!" I believe there is no greater edge in life than having God in your corner and the Captain of your team.

I also believe according to Psalm 4:3 that "the Lord has set aside the godly man for Himself, the Lord hears when I call to Him." Surprise: The Lord does favor the godly man or woman and desires to shower blessings upon them.

So, does God really work in extraordinary ways for those who order their ways according to His Word? “Absolutely yes!”

Hebrews 11:6 is a cornerstone in my view of reality and personal worldview. It says; “6) And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” This verse followed up immediately with “The Hall of Fame” of ordinary men and women whose names are etched in the chapters of human history. What sets them apart? They were on God's team! He worked in mighty ways in and through them. They experienced the “Gain of Godliness!”

But, there is a catch, they lived with a totally different value system from their worldly counterparts. They enjoyed life on a different level. They had inner treasures and overflowing wealth and joy that the world cannot imagine.

Paul talked about the surpassing value he found in his personal relationship with Jesus Christ in Philippians 3:7-11. By contrast, worldly pursuits were like sewage to him. They meant nothing to him. He counted them as a loss or worse, they were a liability in his new value system.

In the process of gaining Christ, Paul was content with very little worldly equity. The treasure he found in the Spirit far surpassed the worldly values he gave up in his pursuit of knowing Jesus Christ. He focused on the “Gain of Godliness.”

In 1 Timothy 6:6-8, Paul was introducing Timothy to his Surpassing Value System. He was watering the seeds of the “Gain of Godliness.” He was inviting Timothy into a deeper walk with God.

We brought nothing of worldly equity into this world, and when we die we will leave all the material stuff behind. In Matthew 6:19-21, Jesus talked about treasure we can store up in heaven. We can invest in eternity. So let me bend your thinking.

There are gains and losses in life. But a worldly ledger is the polar opposite of a heavenly ledger. What the world considers a gain, God considers a loss. What God calls a gain, the world mocks as a loss. This tension and battle rages in all of us.

So which accounting system are you going to embrace? Are you going to chase after money and earthly treasure or are you going to build your walk with God and store up heavenly treasure? This was Paul's proposition to Timothy in this text. No man or woman can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and money.

But wait, there is more to consider. You need to weigh the temporal against the eternal. Which value system has the best yield over the longest period of time? Are the fleeting pleasures of this life worth more than eternity?

Paul concludes in this text to Timothy that the “Gain of Godliness” far out performs the pleasures of the world. Godliness not only gives you an edge in this life because God rewards those who seek Him, but the treasures multiply many times over throughout eternity.

This proposition from Paul to Timothy has greatly impacted my life. I have not only placed faith in Jesus Christ as my Saviour, but like Paul, I have pulled all stops to embrace the surpassing value of daily building a deeper walk with Jesus Christ. I have experienced the unspeakable “Gain of Godliness” many times over in my walk with God, but I am not content. I desire to “press on” deeper and deeper in my walk with Jesus Christ and soar higher and higher on the wings of faith. I believe there is no limit to the “Gain of Godliness.”

Jesus Christ invites you into this same value system. He longs for you to embrace the “Gain of Godliness.” He wants you to move beyond salvation and infancy to build a deep and sincere walk with God. He wants you to go deep in your relationship with Him. He invites you to pull all stops in your relationship with Him and store up exceeding abundant treasures in heaven.

Now for the disclaimer: “This is an equal opportunity investment. The only limitation is you!”

The Noose of Greed: 1 Timothy 6:9-10

“9) But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10) For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

Paul now warns Timothy of one of the greatest dangers of the human soul. He exposes the love of money and the pursuit of wealth. In verse nine he uses three word pictures to describe the lure of the desire to get rich. Let’s look at them.

First, Paul warned Timothy that the seed of greed would cause him to fall endlessly into temptation. Jesus was tempted for forty days and nights, then it came to an end. But Paul warned that the desire to get rich is an unending fall into temptation. The lust for money is never satisfied. It becomes a god that can never be appeased.

This pit is lined with every form of sin. The companions of greed are pride, fleshly passions, sensual lusts, every form of addiction, human exploitation, and many evil vices.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray to the Father and ask that He “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (Matthew 6:13) This prayer includes begging the Father to pluck the seed of greed out of our soul. Few things lead faster into temptation than the desire to get rich.

Second, Paul warned Timothy that the seed of greed would automatically place snares and traps in his life. Snares by design are hidden and they are deadly. The purpose of a snare is to

choke the life out of its unsuspecting victim. When you make becoming rich your life goal, you automatically put a noose around your own neck.

Ironically, that's exactly how Judas died. His desire to get rich turned him into a traitor and choked the life out of him. He abandoned Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. His love of money put a noose around his neck and he went out and hanged himself. His fate was not coincidental! It illustrates this point.

Finally, Paul warned Timothy that the seed of greed would fill his life with "many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction." These foolish and harmful desires become compulsions that drive people to the point of having no wisdom, common sense, or self restraint. They thoughtlessly sacrifice marriage, family, friends, reputation, good stewardship, and their spiritual life on the altar dedicated to the god of greed and money.

Note the word "plunge" in verse nine. It is the idea of standing on a cliff and taking a dive into certain ruin and destruction. Why? Because the greedy are blinded. They fail to look before they leap. There is no promise of a net to catch them or water to stop their fall. At the bottom is concrete painted blue. It is a plunge into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone. The splash at the bottom punctuates the fate of eternal destruction. They are infatuated with the love of money to the point of losing their own soul.

Fellow Christian, let me warn you: "The love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang." (1 Timothy 6:10) The picture is that they have taken the knife of greed and pierced their own heart. It is a self-inflicted wound.

Stop minimizing this sober warning! No longer make excuses for your greed. Be honest with yourself! If your love for money is choking your love for Jesus, if you are struggling in your spiritual life, it may be that you are serving the god of money! Your soul will be double-minded and tormented without end!

I fully concur that it is the blessing of the Lord that makes people rich, and He adds no sorrow to it. When you seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, He promises to become your Faithful Provider. But, you cannot love God and money at the same time. The love of money will blur your vision, harden your heart, dampen your fire, and interrupt your fellowship with God. I beg you to put Jesus first. Seek Him above all else. Unleash the Kingdom resources God has entrusted to you.

Which of the seven churches in Revelation are you attending? My desire is to flee from Laodicia and abide in Philadelphia! I want to bask in the love of Jesus and run through open doors for His glory. I want to burn hot for Him and not have my fire extinguished by my own greed. Like many, I have had that noose around my neck. I have spent time gasping for spiritual life because of my own pitiful greed.

Let me be candid, today's Western Church needs to repent from the love of money. Revival will forever tarry when the true god we worship are the dollar bills we are holding in our hands or hoarding in our bank accounts. It's time to lay up treasures in heaven and invest in eternity. It's time to repent from greed and return to God with all of our heart, all of our soul and all of our mind!

Run with Intentional Fervor: 1 Timothy 6:11

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

Paul warned Timothy to flee from every trap or snare associated with the love of money. He wanted him to avoid this huge danger that often entangles the human soul.

Instead, he wanted him to pursue the things that define a man or woman of God. He wanted him to run after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, goodness, perseverance, and gentleness.

Make no mistake, you cannot aim at the target of godliness and the love of money at the same time. They are in polar opposite directions. Paul warned Timothy to flee from the love of money but to pursue God with intentional fervor.

Notice, this is a run and not a passive walk. It can be illustrated by David facing Goliath. He ran toward the battle line. (See 1 Samuel 17:48) There was no hesitation. David had a mission in mind. He had a giant to slay.

We need to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness with the same fervor. These are giant character qualities. They are not optional. Stop hesitating about developing these qualities in your life. Turn you back on the love of money and run after these things!

The Good Fight of Faith: 1 Timothy 6:12

"12) Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

Being a Christian places you in a battle with three strong opponents. Your faith will be tested by the world, your flesh, and the devil. They are opposed to God and those who confess faith in Him. The world hated Jesus Christ, therefore, do not be surprised that it is at enmity with you as well.

I am amused how verses with the same address often compliment each other. My favorite example is John 3:16. Cruise through the New Testament some time and look up every 3:16 verse. It is very intriguing.

The same intrigue relates to 1 Timothy 6:12. If you want to learn more about the good fight of faith, read Ephesians 6:12; “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Romans 6:12 is significant as well)

Be forewarned: You are in an intense battle! The moment you became a Christian by confessing faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you became an enemy of the kingdom of darkness. At that moment your flesh joined forces with the world and the devil against you. They want to shipwreck your faith journey. They will resist you at every juncture.

But greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. (1 John 4:4) Therefore, take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and fight the good fight of faith. Become skilled in putting on the armor of God. Learn how to use the sword of the Spirit and intercessory prayer. God has provided you with everything to become more than a conqueror! You can win this battle. Jesus has already won your victory.

It Will Be Worth It All When We See Jesus: 1 Timothy 6:12-15

“12) Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13) I direct you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, 14) that you keep the commandment without fault or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15) which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of Lords,”

So how long does the good fight of Faith last? The answer according to this text is “until Jesus comes back!” As we approach the end times our confession of faith will be reminiscent of the confession Jesus made before Pontus Pilate. Jesus died for us so that we might live for Him.

Don’t expect the Christian life to be easy. But let’s set the record straight, the non-Christian life is often miserable. Why? “The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy.” (John 10:10) He abuses his own and his time is limited.

By contrast, look Who this text says we serve; “He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of Lords.” And He holds all the cards in His hands. He is the one who gives life to all things. He is in absolute control and will return at the proper time. He will neither be early or late. He will be right on time. History is rushing toward a God-determined climax.

How should we then live? We should keep the commandments without fault or reproach. We should live for the glory of God. We should live with eternity in view. Like the old hymn says; “It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.”

Stewardship, Generosity and Efficiently Delivering Hope. 1 Timothy 6:17-19

“17) Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 18) Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19) storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.”

After warning Timothy about the danger of loving and living for money in 1 Timothy 6:6-12, Paul acknowledged that there are people whom God has blessed with wealth because of a good work ethic and godly values. They should look at themselves as stewards of the resources God has entrusted to them.

More people pass the test of adversity than prosperity, but there are people God has blessed with wealth and great prosperity. Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and David all became very wealthy. Solomon is an example of the corrupting power of wealth, but in the end he came to the realization that knowing God was the only thing that brought lasting meaning and value to life.

Godly people who have been blessed with wealth often have very unique life stories. Many are examples of men and women who defeated all odds because of their faith in God, virtue, hard work, and great diligence. I have met many of these blessed people who are entrepreneurs, business owners, investors, writers, professional athletes, or business executives who have great integrity and a deep love for God.

Do not make the mistake of assuming that all wealth comes from fraud or corruption. To the contrary, it is the blessing of the Lord that makes people rich, and He adds no sorrow to it. The book of Proverbs warns against wealth obtained by fraud. It is like a cancer.

However, there are many wealthy and godly saints who have great faith in God and are living examples of the ways of God in this present world. These people often exercise good will toward others, help many find employment, have great integrity, help fight poverty, and support missions with extraordinary generosity. They are the ones Paul was addressing in 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

When these amazing men and women discover their God-given call and destiny in this life, they become Mountain Movers for the glory of God. But they do not recklessly throw money at just any cause. They look for trusted and proven ministry vehicles through which to give. They want to make sure the supply actually reaches the need and is not chewed up by bloated bureaucracy.

Sadly, many organizations become an end in themselves. They exploit disasters, poverty, and human suffering for photo opportunities to play on the emotions of benevolent people.

So how do you know where to best direct your giving?

As a general rule, no more than 25% of giving should be consumed by administration and overhead by non-profit organizations. Many are frugal and thrive on less. When this number is pushed significantly beyond that point, fraud and corruption are usually in the driver's seat. Always study the finances of the non-profits you support. You might be shocked.

This also goes without saying, but make sure you are giving to non-profit organizations with biblical values and Great Commission goals. If the non-profit is not spreading the gospel and kingdom values it is a waste of both time and resources. Unfortunately, generous people often give to worldly organizations. In this text, Paul wanted people to ensure that generous giving paid eternal dividends.

We at GoServ Global have many ventures like orphan sponsorships, domestic disaster relief, housing, and community development or the building of churches, schools, and medical centers where 100% of every dollar goes directly to the need. Efficiently delivering hope and help to the need is one of our core values.

But the full story is that we have many faithful partners who also support administration and overhead through undesignated giving. This is vital. We could not exist without these gifts.

In this text, Paul was instructing Timothy to both raise up generous givers and help protect the giving of generous people. Good stewardship applies to both sides of the equation. It applies to both the giver and the vehicle that delivers the gift to the need.

If you have been blessed to the point of being a generous giver, I invite you to partner with GoServ Global. We exist to share the gospel in the midst of tragedy. We deliver hope. We work hard to efficiently and effectively connect resources directly to the needs.

GoServ Global is a ministry made up of like-minded people and churches who aspire to be World Changers for the glory of God. We invite you to join this amazing endeavor that is so needed today. Check us out on our webpage or message me directly for more information.

Guard Your Content Of Knowledge: 1 Timothy 6:20-21

“20) O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge”— 21) which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith. Grace be with you.”

Every Christian must guard what has been entrusted to them “in Christ.” All the benefits of salvation from forgiveness and freedom to a clear conscience and fellowship with God can be lost. Fruitful ministry can be recklessly bartered away.

The solution is to place a guard around our heart and mind. Think about this: In John 10:10 Jesus Himself pictured Satan as a thief. He aims to steal, kill, and destroy your walk with God. He wants to steal from you and your family. He wants to thwart the abundant life Jesus has for you.

Note, according to these verses, this has everything to do with guarding your mind from worldly and empty chatter. It involves guarding your mind from false “knowledge.” Colossians 2:8 issues this same warning; “8) See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”

Secular and godless philosophy and psychology blended together with false religions and erroneous conclusions from so-called scientific theory can derail truth and a biblical worldview. I welcome true science and unbiased research. It is the secular and humanistic spin that I reject. Truth can set you free, but lies and deception lead to ruin, sinful bondage, and slavery.

I believe if Paul was living and writing today, he would also include the entertainment industry and every medium of communication that proliferates culture with a secular and antichrist message. What you pump into your mind and heart comes out in your life. You become the expression of what fills your soul.

Guarding what goes into your life is the easiest way to determine what you become. The same is true for food and diet. You literally wear what you eat. If you want to look differently, then consume food and drink differently.

So also, you think, perceive, act, believe, and behave according to what fills your soul. Your view of reality is shaped by the content of so called “knowledge” you pump into your mind. Assume responsibility for what fills your heart and mind. Guard yourself!

This leads directly into a discussion of education systems. Certainly, this admonition for Timothy to guard his soul also becomes the parents responsibility to guard their children.

The eight years I spent in the Iowa Legislature forced me to face the fact that secular education is now ground zero of the culture war in America. Public education has been hijacked by the enemy of the human soul.

We are now at a crisis point. Public education is no longer transparent, neutral, quality, accountable, or decent. It has become the indoctrination tool of the left. My prayer and heart's desire is to save public education, but we have a monumental task in front of us.

I applaud and praise God for every Christian teacher, administrator, and school board member on the front lines in this crucial battle for public education. We are literally now at the point of needing to turn the tide starting with the department of education.

My only purpose in mentioning education systems is to encourage parents to prayerfully consider what it means to “guard” their children. You will reap what you sow in the education of your children. Many Christian youth and young adults are going astray from the faith because of what is “falsely called knowledge.”

As you can see, these two verses that conclude the book of 1 Timothy are packed with application. When we let down our guard at any level, our soul will be under siege. This fallen world is Satan’s domain for a little while longer. Remain vigilant. Be on guard!