



GRACEWAY COMMUNITY CHURCH

PRAXIS

SPIRITUAL TRAINING

PRAXIS of Spiritual Training

A Study on 1 & 2 Timothy

Graceway Community Church

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of
Spiritual Training

Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the English Standard Version Bible.

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Welcome to the August edition of Praxis! Throughout this month we will read through Paul's letters to Timothy.

The readings are brief, in order to cover the Scripture, present the thought, and allow time to take it in through *meditation, contemplation,* and *prayer*. We encourage you to record your responses and the things that the Holy Spirit shows you.

Each reading is set up according to the ancient practice of the *daily office*, with a reading for morning hours, and a reading for the evening hours. Of course, when and how you do this is completely up to you, but we do encourage you to do it at the same time and place each day, in order to simplify and develop the habit.

Take your time and soak in it. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you each day. Even the simplest of things can bring revelation when we dedicate attention to the Spirit and the details.

This compilation has been designed to lead us into the Scripture each day, to help empower us in the Holy Spirit and Truth, and to culminate in the Home Church experience.

Make special note of the pages given to each Sunday, and take time to review your readings and responses from the week. This will help prepare you for a richer experience in Home Church, through both sharing and receiving.

If you are not yet part of a Home Church, we would love to have you experience it for yourself! Find out more from the person who gave you this book, or reach us at www.GracewayRI.org

The commentary that accompanies each reading is written by Ed Pichette Sr., who serves as an elder and a Home Church Leader at Graceway Community.



Paul writes these letters to Timothy as he is approaching the end of his life. His intent is to strengthen and encourage Timothy in his work as a pastor and overseer. Paul warns Timothy to be on guard for false teachers. Many new philosophical ideas were circulating in the ancient world. There were those who tried to incorporate these ideas into Christianity. Often this would result in heresy of one kind or another. Paul encourages Timothy to base his faith on nothing beyond scripture.

Have you witnessed this sort of problem today? Many people still try to force their ideas onto scripture, some without even recognizing it as false teaching. This poses a great threat to the Church, and is the reason that strong discernment is such a significant part of maturing in the Christian faith.

Healthy people want to believe that they are acceptable to God. So there is always a temptation to try to justify what you accept as true from sources outside of scripture with truth from the scriptures. We need to be very cautious and never allow scripture to be twisted in any way as we try to make sense of the world.

What are your thoughts?

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,
1 Timothy 1:1

Note how Paul describes himself as he opens this letter to Timothy. "An apostle... by command of God..."

For Paul, there is no option about using the gift that God has given to him.

He has been gifted by God to be an apostle and that commission is one that has been authorized and commanded by God. He knows that he must be an apostle.

Who are you in Christ? What gifting has the Holy Spirit poured out into your life? Do you see it the way Paul does, as a command of God that you should be using your gift for His purposes on an ongoing basis? If you have truly made Jesus Lord of your life then you've given him permission to direct your life's path.

How now shall you proceed?

²To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Timothy 1:2

In most of his epistles, Paul is much more long winded and eloquent as he opens the letter greeting and encouraging his audience. Notice how terse his opening greeting here is. In verse 1 he introduces himself. In verse 2 he writes that this letter is for Timothy. Give special attention to how Paul describes Timothy: "my true child in the faith."

As Paul's fellow worker in God's kingdom, Paul feels a special connection to Timothy. Paul had been with Timothy as Timothy recognized his calling and started his ministry. Are there those in your life with whom your heart resonates? Do you show concern for those whom God has placed in spiritual authority over you? These men and women are a gift from God to you!

Are you discipling any of your friends or acquaintances who are believers, and investing in their lives? Jesus instruction is that we be not only disciples, but disciple makers.

The wise man/woman is both being disciplined, as well as discipling others in their life.

We are ultimately under the authority of God. But don't loose sight of the fact that His kingdom is one where love is the overriding principle. We glory in the grace and mercy that we receive through God's love for us. Let's respond in like manner to those around us, especially those to whom we are connected in some special way.

¹⁵Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. 1 John 4:15-17

³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

1 Timothy 1:3-4

Paul quickly gets to the point in this letter. He is concerned for the church in Ephesus. Whenever anyone brought some type of false teaching to one of the churches where Paul had worked, he was always quick to try to put an end to it. This is no exception. So after his brief greeting he commands Timothy to get on top of the situation.

Timothy is to confront the false teachers and prevent the spread of heresy (unbiblical teaching) – no small or unimportant task! We'll see Paul repeat this idea over and again throughout the letter.

Do you see threats to the spiritual lives of those around you? Is God moving you somehow to intervene and bring a word of warning and encouragement into someone's life?

By His Spirit God will use us to be His spokespeople in the world, presenting His Truth and His Love.

Are you ready and willing to be used in this way?

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, Colossians 1:24

⁵ The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶ Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, ⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions. 1 Timothy 1:5-7

Quickly, Paul goes back to the most basic and important matters for believers: Love, a pure heart, a good conscience and sincere faith. All these are issues of fundamental importance in the Christian life.

These are what we are to cultivate in our own lives and in the lives of those around us.

We must guard these core values and seek to live them out daily. We can confidently and lovingly confront any opposition to these values and make it plain that anything other is a “wandering away.”

Godly love confronts the one wandering away, for their own benefit that they may be brought back to the center of our faith, Jesus Christ.

⁸Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 1 Timothy 1:8

Paul here acknowledges the value of the law. He does not say that the law applied only until Christ came. He makes it very clear that the law has value – but only if it is used in an appropriate way. As believers, we are no longer under the condemnation that comes with the law. Christ has set us free from the death that comes when we fail to keep all the law. But while we are no longer under that curse of the law, the law itself still points us in the right direction. Remember how Jesus Himself summed up the law:

³⁶"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 22:36-40

The law has value to help unbelievers understand that they are sinners. It also has value to demonstrate the holiness of the Father to those who have put their faith in Jesus.

¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." 1 Peter 1:14-16

As Peter so aptly put it, we are to be holy because our God who has called us is holy!

What practices do you have that help "you also be holy in all your conduct" in your daily walk with Jesus?

⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers,¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,¹¹ in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

1 Timothy 1:9-11

What is meant by, "the law is not laid down for the just?" Is Paul saying that we, who have been justified by the blood of Jesus can now violate the law? Is it acceptable for us to murder, steal or commit adultery? Of course not!

Paul's point is that as believers, we are no longer under the curse of the law. We no longer live in fear of the punishment that awaits transgressors of the law! But those who have not believed are still under the curse of the law.

As Paul describes in Romans 7 and 8,

God's purpose for the law today is to communicate to all people that they are sinners in need

of a way to be rescued from the fate that awaits those who reject Jesus. The law is for the unbeliever, in hope that they will turn away from God's wrath by accepting the sacrifice of Jesus on their behalf.

So the law is for the unbeliever, to warn them about what will happen if they refuse to believe. The punishment that the law brings is not for the believer - yet the believer can still learn about the holiness of God through the law.

¹² I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. **1 Timothy 1:12-14**

Even as he writes to Timothy describing the fate of those who have not believed, he remembers where he has come from. He is moved again, to demonstrate the thankfulness that fills his heart for what God, through Jesus, has done for him.

The love and grace that Jesus showed to Paul was never very far from his consciousness.

How about you? Do you contemplate daily the gift that has been given to you? Do you have any practices in your life to remind you about God's love for you?

There is a memory technique called tagging. For example, you might tie a string around your finger to remind you to stop for bread and milk on the way home. The string around your finger is "tied" to the need for bread and milk.

It is possible that communion is also meant to be a kind of "tagging" for believers. There is nothing I do more often in the course of an ordinary day than bring some food or drink to my lips to consume. If I "tag" the memory of Jesus' sacrifice for me to the act of eating then each time I bring food to my mouth I'll be reminded of Jesus' love for me!

I can't say for sure, but I think that this may be a part of why Jesus connected communion with food. He might have connected it with sitting down to a Passover meal or any one of dozens of possible things. But He did connect it to eating – something we all do many times daily.

What are your thoughts?

¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

1 Timothy 1:15

Note that Paul is quoting a saying that was perhaps well known in his day. Whoever coined the saying captured well the way we as believers should see ourselves. We are not to concern ourselves with the past sins of others.

We should remember what we were like before Christ came into our heart to deliver us from the curse of the law. Never look at someone else and thank God that you're not a sinner like them.

Jesus is our example in all things and the only one whom we should compare ourselves to!

Each of us should critique only ourselves and remember how great is the mercy that has been shown to us. Take a moment and read the story in Luke 7:39-48.

⁴⁷ Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven-- for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." Luke 7:47

How does this apply to you? In response to God's gift of forgiveness, how do you love?

What are your thoughts?

¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷ To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. ¹⁸ This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹ holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, ²⁰ among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

1 Timothy 1:16-20

We know that we are saved due only to the great love which the Father has shown to us through His Son Jesus Christ. But sometimes I forget that God did not just save me to put me on the mantle and sit quietly until I leave this life and enter heaven. He saved me with a work to do for His kingdom. I have His Spirit to aid, inspire and enable me to do the work He has prepared for me to do, and so do you!

Paul here recognizes that God saved him a) because He loved Paul and also b) because God had a job for Paul to do. God has saved all of us in a similar way.

What is He calling you to do? What God-given destiny awaits you?

Be excited and thankful for the future that God has prepared for you.

Take it one day at a time, and walk into it with joy and confidence knowing that He is beside you every step of the way!

Verse 19 and 20 provide a warning for those who will not respond to God's call in faith. Do not be like those unbelievers. Rather look to Paul's example! Find all the fullness and abundance in life that Jesus offers you!

What are your thoughts?

¹ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

1 Timothy 2:1-6

Paul now turns his attention to some specific tasks. The first thing Paul mentions is the need for prayer and thanksgiving for all people. He continues on asking for prayer for kings and those in high position.

Paul is saying that we need to seek a stable and just government. If there is chaos in the streets, how difficult would it be to try to share the gospel with others? God wants all to be saved.

Take time today to follow apostle Paul's instruction to make "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving for all people..."

⁷For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. ⁸I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;

1 Timothy 2:7-8

Here Paul describes how we can be working together with others in spreading the gospel. Like Paul, we should desire that everywhere people will be praying, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.

While we may not have the opportunity to share the gospel every day, we certainly will have the opportunity to pray each day!

Every day we are to pray, worship God and strive to have unity with others. In doing these things we can know that we are fulfilling God's desire in our lives.

Regardless of what particular gift the Spirit has given you, you are called to pray, worship and, as much as possible, to be at peace with all people.

⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. ⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Romans 12:6-18

⁹ likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰ but with what is proper for women who profess godliness-- with good works. 1 Timothy 2:8-10

In the next few verses, Paul speaks specifically to women. However, I think that much of what he says applies equally to men. Here in verses 9-10 he deals with the issues of vanity and modesty.

Our focus needs to be on serving God in all we do.

Personal vanity takes that focus off God and puts in onto ourselves.

Lack of modesty does the same thing. There is, therefore, no room in a believer's life for either of these two vices. We all must be aware of the challenges that we face. If we see any behaviors that do not help us to live out a Christian life of integrity and humility, we need to do away with them - and replace them with "good works."

Spend a few moments in personal reflection on this issue.

¹¹ Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵ Yet she will be saved through childbearing-- if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

1 Timothy 2:11-15

The command in verse 12 that a woman is not to teach or exercise authority over a man is among the most difficult for us to grasp or understand. Culturally, women were usually not allowed to learn very much outside their own home. So, due to a lack of training, they were not in a position to lead and/or teach in the church.

In these verses, Paul briefly discusses the roles of Adam and Eve in the fall in an attempt to justify his position. Again, there are differing views on exactly what Paul is trying to say in explaining why women must be submissive to men in these roles. Some have suggested that women (or perhaps especially the women of Ephesus) had been more influenced by heretics than the local men had been. However, I don't know of any arguments to defend that particular position.

In my opinion, I believe that this prohibition is a consequence of the patriarchal society of Paul's day. Given that, perhaps we should understand this passage to be a prohibition against allowing unqualified people (regardless of gender) to teach or exercise authority over others. This is admittedly a very difficult passage to interpret accurately.

What are your thoughts?

¹ The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. **1 Timothy 3:1**

As we begin chapter 3, Paul shifts his attention in a different direction. Now he moves to discuss the office of overseer. Most modern English translations have the term, overseer, for the Greek word ἘΠΙΣΚΟΠῆς, (episkopes). But this word has historically been translated in various ways including overseer, bishop and elder.

These English words imply various and differing amounts of authority in English. The Greek is, however, probably much less nuanced. The word probably refers to anyone who plays some sort of leadership role in the church.

Paul wants to show Timothy the characteristics to look for in a leader.

This will be an important point to remember as we proceed. It is the character of the person that is most important!

As we continue, look beyond the surface of the text to the underlying personal characteristics that Paul has in mind.

² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,
1 Timothy 3:2

Here in verse 2 we see seven characteristics of a leader. Most of these are fairly self explanatory. Let's take a moment to look at "the husband of one wife."

This has often been understood to mean that a leader must be both a) married and b) never divorced and/or remarried. But is a man who is married of better character than a single man? Not necessarily. What about a man whose wife commits adultery and leaves him for another man? Does the action of a spouse disqualify the man from serving as a leader in the church?

I think the answer to this lies in the Greek. This passage can be translated "husband of one wife" or as "man of one woman." You've probably heard the expression, "a one woman man." The core idea is that a man should not be a womanizer. If he is single he is free to date, but he should never be too deeply involved with more than one woman. If he is married then he should be involved with his wife alone.

Understanding this verse in this way, it becomes a matter of the man's character rather than the details of his marital status. The value of understanding the passage this way is that now all the qualities listed in this verse speak directly to the man's character.

If you insist on reading "husband of one wife" literally, then even a man whose wife has died would be disqualified from being a leader. I don't think that this is what Paul had in mind when he wrote this verse.

What are your thoughts?

³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive,⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 1 Timothy 3:3-5

As Paul goes on, it continues to be clear that he is concerned first and foremost with the character of those who aspire to be leaders in the church. Perhaps verse 5 is the most effective in this regard.

Surely, if a man is not able to manage his own home, how will he be an effective leader in the church.

Paul's definition of a leader here in 1 Timothy 3 is a description of the type of character that we all should be striving to model as believers.

Not all of us will become leaders in the church, but regardless all of us ought to possess a godly character and live exemplary lives. There have been far too many examples of leaders who have been shown to have habits or behaviors that are completely improper. The church's reputation has suffered much because of a lack of character in its leadership and members.

What are your thoughts? How can we turn this around?

⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

1 Timothy 3:6-7

Here in verse 6, Paul warns against involving a recent convert in church leadership. This issue comes up from time to time. New converts are rarely asked to become involved in church leadership, but from time to time a well known celebrity may become a new believer. The person may be well known as a performer or actor or perhaps they may be well known for their involvement in politics.

We can imagine that such a person might have the ability to be a strong witness for Christ because of their fame. But the truth is that being famous is not a requirement for leadership in the church. If every person is not given time to grow and understand their own place in Christ, pushing them too quickly into leadership can result in disaster – both for the church as a whole and for the individual.

People need time to grow into their new lives as believers. If we put too much pressure on them to help lead the church too soon, we run the risk of pushing them away as they begin to feel overburdened. We should never push a person into some ministry because we think it might work out well. Instead pray that God, through His Holy Spirit, would minister to that new believer and lead him/her to the place that He has for them.

I think that this is good advice for any and every new believer. Notice how concerned Paul is in these verses that the leader should be well thought of by outsiders. Our reputation as believers matters perhaps even more than we know!

⁸ Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. ⁹They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 1 Timothy 3:8-9

Paul now turns to the matter of deacons. The term deacon derives from the Greek word which means servant. Deacons serve the church by providing services for or on behalf of the church.

Deacons fill a crucial role in the church. As such they also need to be people of good repute. Again, the list of behaviors are such that they describe the character of someone who is fit to minister as a deacon.

Note verse 9, “They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.” That is, they must learn to know scripture well and what’s more they must conform their behavior to meet scriptural standards. Believers strive to have a good reputation so that they might be better witnesses for Christ. For leaders and deacons, the standard is raised even higher.

What are your thoughts?

¹⁰ And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.

1 Timothy 3:10

Paul adds an additional requirement – that a deacon be tested before a final appointment. As they carry out their duties in the church, deacons will necessarily come into close contact with church members. It is imperative that a deacon should not behave in such a way as to offend or harm or misguide anyone.

In order to do all that is possible to guarantee this, the deacon should be tested – put into the role where he will serve as deacon and examined that he is able to carry out his duties in an exemplary way.

The work we offer to God should always be the best we are capable of doing – whether we are deacons or not.

What do you think?

¹¹ Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. ¹³ For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. **1 Timothy 3:11-13**

Next, Paul adds a few requirements that are more or less similar to requirements for leaders. Verse 11 speaks about the wife of a deacon. What difference, you may ask, does a person's spouse make to their character?

Remember in Paul's day, people did not decide for themselves who they would marry. The choice of a spouse was made for you by your parents. But the truth is that when people live together as husband and wife they clearly have a great impact on each other.

Having a spouse of good character is a reflection on you; that you also are more likely to be of good character.

In verse 13, he concludes that being a good deacon can help a person's reputation in the community. At the same time, it can be a wonderful testimony about living one's life in Christ.

¹⁴I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, ¹⁵if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

1 Timothy 3:14-15

In these verses, Paul explains that he is writing to Timothy to teach him about how “one ought to behave in the household of God.” Until this point, he has been telling Timothy about the behavior of church leaders and deacons.

Now he seems to turn his attention to how EVERYONE in the household of God ought to behave. In fact, all of the characteristics that Paul said a leader and/or deacon should possess are ones we should all be striving for. Not all of us are called to serve as leaders or deacons, but we are all called to be good ambassadors for Jesus.

The qualities Paul has been talking about are all admirable.

It is good to be concerned about our reputation, not for our own sake but for the sake of the gospel.

When unbelievers see a person who claims to be a believer acting in a dishonorable way, they often conclude that the person is a phony. It’s all too easy for someone to hold Christianity as being phony when they see people who claim to be believers, acting poorly. You may not always know when you’re being observed.

Do you behave differently when you know you’re being observed, than when you think no one is looking? God is looking for His followers to be people of integrity. A person who values their integrity is one who does the right thing whether someone is watching or not!

What struck you most in this week's readings from 1 Timothy?

What questions or comments did you come away with?

How does what you learned relate to your life?

How does it relate to the Church family?

Notes from Home Church.

¹⁶ Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. 1 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)

There has been great controversy in the church over this verse. To demonstrate why, you need to see this verse in the King James Version bible:

¹⁶ And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. 1 Timothy 3:16 (KJV)

There are many who claim that the KJV is the only accurate English translation of the bible. Here in 1 Timothy 3:16, we see in the KJV that "God was manifest in the flesh." The clear implication is that Jesus is God! Look closely at this verse in the ESV. "God" has been replaced with "He." Many KJV supporters have claimed that the ESV, NIV and other English translations are trying to translate the bible in such a way as to deny the deity of Christ. They claim that this verse is an example.

While I do not have the space here to explain the details, rest assured that the ESV, NIV and other newer translations have it right. Jesus' deity is not being denied. The KJV was originally completed in 1611. Since that time many more ancient manuscripts have been discovered and we now have a Greek text that is far superior to what was available in the 17th century. While only few of us will ever learn the original languages of scripture, as English speakers, we have a large variety of translations available to us. The number is so large it is almost embarrassing!

While you may never learn Greek and Hebrew you should take the time to become more aware of these many English translations. Some are more fit to be used for bible study while others may be useful to help us meditate and pray through scripture.

There are books available that discuss many various English translations and their strengths and weaknesses. For personal bible study I use the English Standard Version (ESV), the New International Version (NIV), the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) and the New American Standard Bible (NASB). I believe that using a set of translations is superior to using any one translation by itself.

¹⁶ Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. 1 Timothy 3:16

Jesus was:

a) *"manifested in the flesh."* Philippians 2 tells us that Jesus emptied Himself of many of His divine attributes to become fully human. The bible teaches that Jesus was fully God and fully human at the same time. I can't grasp how that might be but I do believe God's word. The Nicene creed confirms that He was "true God and true man."

b) *"vindicated by the Spirit."* As a true human, Jesus was led by the same Spirit that now dwells in all believers. He allowed the Father, through the Spirit, to guide His each and every step. Jesus followed the Spirit's leading to His death. He was vindicated by the Father when He rose on that first Easter Sunday.

c) *"seen by angels."* Jesus ministry is the climax of human history. His work is the centerpiece of God's grace and mercy. His life and death are the central focus of all of heaven's work. Even the angelic hosts were overawed at His grace and love. See 1 Peter 1:12.

d) *"proclaimed among the nations."* Jesus work has been and continues to be made known throughout all the earth. His command to spread the gospel to the whole world continues on its trek until all have heard!

e) *"believed on in the world."* The Holy Spirit has been at work since creation pointing people to Jesus. Through the work of the Spirit, many have come to believe on Jesus. He is the firstborn of all creation. He is the firstborn from the dead! He is our hope! He is our life!

f) *"taken up in glory."* Having been raised from the dead, Jesus spent a few days appearing to His disciples and to others. Finally, the time came for Him to ascend to heaven where He is now enthroned at the right hand of the Father. But when He ascended from the earth, He sent the Holy Spirit who now dwells in the heart of every believer to inspire and enable each of us to do His will.

What does Jesus mean to you?

¹Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; ² Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

1 Timothy 4:1-2 KJV

Here Paul warns Timothy about who he is really struggling against as a minister of the gospel. Whenever you stand up for Jesus and preach His name you can be sure that you will get Satan's attention. He is a powerful foe.

In your own strength, you will not be able to withstand Satan's attacks. But take heart, you are not alone in your battle with the evil one. God is with you and by His grace you will overcome if you hold on until the end. Remember you are among "the called and the chosen and the faithful."

¹⁴These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful.

Revelation 17:14 (KJV)

³ who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵ for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

1 Timothy 4:3-5

Many false teachers have taught that people can show themselves to be good examples by denying themselves many of the blessings that God has given to us. Paul reminds us of the truth that everything God has created is good.

There is no sin in receiving the good things that God has created for us so long as we receive them with thanksgiving. God may, at some time and for a period of time, ask us to forego some blessing He has given us.

We should not think that we make ourselves more holy by denying the blessings that God has for us.

If you want to be pleasing in God's eyes there is no need to become an ascetic. Some people actually deny themselves thinking that they will win God's grace by doing so. Rather than deny yourself, seek Him. Pray to understand the role that God has created for you. What gifts has He given you to be used for His glory? You bring glory to God when you live your life as He intended it for you. In that place you will find peace, contentment and meaning!

What are your thoughts?

6 If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.
1 Timothy 4:6

Paul continues encouraging Timothy to follow the advice he has given. Notice how Paul tells Timothy to:

a) *“Put these things before the brothers.” The minister’s role is to teach and preach. Doing that well involves reminding people of God’s truths time and again. It is not enough to teach something once and then never revisit it. We all need to have God’s word put before us time and again.*

b) *“Being trained in the words of the faith.” The minister (and every believer) needs to be trained in God’s word. We cannot obey scripture that we do not know or understand. Part of the minister’s role is to keep pointing us back to scripture so that we might understand and live it out daily.*

c) *“The good doctrine that you have followed.” Finally, we must follow God’s word where it leads us. Paul reminds Timothy that he has followed God’s teaching in his life. In this way Paul encourages him to continue following God’s leading.*

What is your take?

⁷ Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; **1 Timothy 4:7**

In Paul's day, Greek philosophies were sprouting up everywhere. Many people would attach themselves to these ideas and then somehow try to combine them into the Christian faith.

In 1 John, we saw an example about how some had tried to combine the teaching of the scripture with the Greek philosophy Gnosticism. Trying to bring scripture and human philosophy together almost always results in the denial of core central Christian themes. So Paul advises Timothy to remove himself from all such thinking.

What irreverent silly myths are there in our world today?

How do these deny the truth of scripture?

How can you protect yourself from being negatively effected by these teachings?

⁸ for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. ⁹ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. ¹⁰ For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. 1 Timothy 4:8-10

Paul continues encouraging Timothy, reminding him that training in godliness is of far greater value than physical training. In fact training in godliness has a wonderful goal in sight. The goal is to build up our hope.

Our hope is in the living God who is the savior of all.

He Himself is the goal we are hoping to attain. He is savior especially for the believer because He has given us the hope that when we pass through death's door we will awake into His heavenly kingdom.

¹ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Colossians 3:1-4

Reflect on your hope set on the living God, Savior of all people.

¹¹ Command and teach these things. ¹² Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. ¹³ Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. 1 Timothy 4:11-13

Timothy is a young man. It might be easy for him to be intimidated by people in the church. Paul here reminds Timothy that his authority is based on the call God has placed on his life – not on his age.

No matter a person's age, demonstrating love, faith and purity will show the individual's spiritual maturity.

We all need to be encouraging each other to love one another, to read scripture, to build one another up, and to teach each other as God shows the way.

Having faced them himself, Paul understands the challenges that Timothy will face. So he tries to help Timothy by telling him the things that have helped Paul in his walk.

What has happened in your life as a believer that has encouraged you most? Set your mind on that sort of thing and allow the Spirit to renew and strengthen you.

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Philippians 4:8

¹⁶ Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. ¹⁵ Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. ¹⁶ Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. 1 Timothy 4:14-16

Paul's desire for Timothy is that he should exercise the spiritual gift that God had given to him. Paul understands that in becoming a minister of the gospel Timothy will find the fulfillment and satisfaction from his life that we all desire.

**It won't always be easy, but it will
always be worthwhile.**

Throughout this letter Paul is encouraging Timothy to pursue the path that God has opened for him.

What does God have in store for you? The advice in verse 16 is very good advice indeed, "Do not neglect the gift you have!" Pursue God and the direction that He has for your life.

Find like minded faithful believing people who can work with you and help you to develop the gift that God has given you. Develop and exercise the gift you have. In doing so you can know that you are being the person God wants you to be. You will be well on your way to hear Him say:

²¹ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'
Matthew 25:21

¹ Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, ² older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. 1 Timothy 5:1-2

Paul's advice to Timothy in dealing with people is to treat them all like family.

It's important to speak the truth always but it is also important to do so in such a way that preserves the relationship. Even when we have to display "tough love" it should be done in a way that preserves the dignity of all involved. Our highest priority is to love always. That Christian value can never be compromised.

What are your thoughts?

³ Honor widows who are truly widows. ⁴ But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. ⁵ She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, ⁶ but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. ⁷ Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach.

1 Timothy 5:3-7

Here in verse 3, Paul mentions “truly widows.” As he continues it becomes clear that he is referring to widows who have no other possible means of support. In Paul’s day, a woman without a father or husband to support her was in a terrible situation. Society did not provide any other way for her to sustain herself.

In Paul’s view, it was only in such a dire situation that it was appropriate for church funds to be used to help someone out. As Paul continues in verse 5-6, he tells Timothy (and by extension us) that a woman’s dire need alone did not suffice for the church to step in to support her. Paul adds in verse 5 that there must be clear evidence that she has dedicated herself to God.

These verses are clearly rooted in the society of Paul’s day. What underlying principles should we take away from this passage? How should we decide, using this and perhaps other scripture, where and when the church is called to intervene financially to help out those in desperate need?

This question does not have an easy answer. It is one that is seldom discussed in the Church. But it is not unusual for a pastor to find himself being asked for help by people dealing with very tough times.

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

1 Timothy 5:8

Paul gives us a bit more to work with here on this issue of providing for others. He says that “anyone who does not provide for his relatives AND ESPECIALLY for members of his household – this person has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

The word translated as relatives is literally “his own.” Paul goes on to add especially for his household – his immediate family that lives with him. So “his relatives” is a bigger group than simply his immediate family. As I understand this then, we have responsibility for our family members – even those who do not live within the same four walls as we do!

My intention here is not to put a sense of guilt on anyone. I’m simply wrestling with the scripture to understand what Paul is getting at. It seems to me that what Paul is saying, at least in part, is that we should not turn our backs on extended family members in need. It is not appropriate to send them away empty handed and to tell them to go to the church for help.

Is it possible that God may want you to help out people in your extended family? What’s your take?

⁹ Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, ¹⁰ and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work.

1 Timothy 5:9-10

Paul continues here adding specifics about the requirements that are necessary for a widow to be enrolled. Note that it is not enough that she can talk a good talk. She must demonstrate that she has walked a good walk!

What is Paul saying about the kind of life someone should lead in order that they might be eligible to be helped by the church? What implications, if any, does that have for those of us who are not widows asking the church for help?

What are your thoughts?

¹¹ But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry ¹² and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith. ¹³ Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. ¹⁴ So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. ¹⁵ For some have already strayed after Satan.

1 Timothy 5:11-15

Paul encourages Timothy not to enroll younger widows. Here, he set sixty as the minimum age for a widow to be enrolled. Let's take a closer look at verse 12. Paul says that younger women might be drawn away from Christ by their passions and desire to marry. If they do so, then they would "incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith."

Here's what I think he means. A widow in Paul's day was forced to put all her trust in God. If she were to marry again, then she would be putting her trust in her new husband to care for her. In doing so, she would be trusting God less. In Paul's view, that is a great loss – in fact Paul says she would incur condemnation. In our culture this is indeed a very difficult idea to grasp. If nothing else it shows how intensely Paul was focused on putting faith in Jesus above all else. Paul had abandoned everything that he once considered so very important, in order to pursue Christ. Anything that threatened that faith was to be avoided at all cost!

⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith-- ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3:4-11

Do we value our faith in the same way?

What struck you most in this week's readings from 1 Timothy?

What questions or comments did you come away with?

How does what you learned relate to your life?

How does it relate to the Church family?

Notes from Home Church.

¹⁶If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows. 1 Timothy 5:16

Here Paul declares that a woman who is a believer and has relatives who are widows, is responsible to care for the widow. Remember to read this verse in its culture. A woman in Paul's day had much responsibility for her family but virtually no authority. So when Paul says that a believing woman has responsibility for related widows, he is saying that her husband must now, at least in part, take the responsibility to support this widow. It's easy to see how this could create strife within a family. Yet, Paul affirms that the church must be the last available resource to provide for a widow.

Why do you think Paul put so many restrictions around having the church care for widows?

How does this compare to how our society cares for those in desperate need here in the USA?

¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages." ¹⁹ Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 1 Timothy 5:17-19

Paul quickly moves on past the issue of caring for widows and turns his attention to the care of the church leaders. Here he takes what appears to be a very different stance.

Leaders are to be well honored. Any charge against one of them must be corroborated by two or more witnesses. When Paul says, "the laborer deserves his wages," he seems to be implying that leaders should be well recompensed for their efforts. Paul never demanded any pay for his work, but he did say that he had a right to make a claim for pay. He simply would not do anything to try to collect money for his work in the church. But when it came to other preachers or ministers Paul defended their right to be paid for their work.

What do you think? Is Paul's attitude about paying ministers consistent with the way he wanted widows to be cared for?

Why does Paul want to ensure that leaders should be honored and paid for their work?

²⁰ As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. ²¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. **1 Timothy 5:20-21**

Paul quickly turns to a new point. He instructs Timothy to rebuke any who persist in sin. In my forty years as a believer, I don't think I've ever seen a case where this was done.

In my experience there have been times when someone's persistent sin became known in the local church. But in just about every case I can remember, the situation was "resolved" by that person leaving the local church and attending a church across town. In the few cases, where the person's behavior was made known to the leaders of the new church, nothing was done to address the issue.

I believe that in the church, we do not look at sin as God does. We are thankful to God for His grace to forgive us our sin when we confess it. We praise Him for making a way for us by condemning His own Son to pay the price of our sin. We appreciate that God hates sin thoroughly. Yet all at the same time we tolerate sin in one another.

It is difficult to confront someone when you see sin in their life. But if we won't confront sin, then we ourselves can become guilty of disobeying God. Confronting a sinner publicly is obviously hard to do, but Paul, speaking for God, gave Timothy a clear command to do just that.

What do you think?

²²Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. 1 Timothy 5:22

Most people understand this “laying on of hands” as a ceremony where someone is set aside for some particular service or perhaps ordination. Paul warns Timothy to take time and be sure that God is indeed choosing to set this person aside for a particular task.

The idea is that if the candidate is false and uses his office for sinful purposes then the one who appointed him to that office shares in his guilt. Paul is warning Timothy to be sure about those he appoints for their sake and for his own sake.

What do you think about this? Does a minister who appoints an unworthy candidate, who later uses his office to sin, share the guilt in some way for that sin?

Whatever you may think about that, Paul’s encouragement to Timothy to keep himself pure is one that is repeated throughout almost all of Paul’s writings.

(No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.)

1 Timothy 5:23

Note how this verse is set inside parentheses. This is done because the verse seems to be set in the midst of several verses that are all discussing a different issue – the appointing of a person to a special service or ministry.

Here, Paul quickly advises Timothy to “use a little wine” to help him with some stomach problems he apparently had. I’ve known several people who struggled with alcoholism. They try to interpret this passage in such a way that the word wine comes across as more like grape juice.

Because of their addiction they want to believe that consuming alcohol in any way, shape or form is sinful. To bolster this position, they want to read out the word wine from this verse. While I am sympathetic with the desire to avoid the excess of alcohol, still the word is what it is! It says wine and it means wine.

There is no sin in consuming wine – as long as it is not done in excess that results in drunkenness. We need to be careful when we read scripture. We cannot redefine words to make them sound more comforting to us. We must, as best we can, be honest and true to the words of scripture. We must take all scripture together and build our doctrines about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, etc. in a way that is faithful and true to all the words of scripture.

Study God’s word. Pray that the Spirit would help you to clearly see the point that God is making in each part of scripture that you may read. As best you can, try to be aware of your own prejudices and don’t allow them to color your reading. Doing so may prove much more difficult than you anticipate.

²⁴ The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. ²⁵ So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden. 1 Timothy 5:24-25

Paul quickly returns to discussing the issue of appointing ministers in the church. He earlier warned Timothy to take his time and be sure before he laid hands on anyone to commission them.

Here he mentions that it can take some time to know a person well enough to know if they should be commissioned to ministry. In Paul's opinion it's better to be slow and sure rather than quick and presumptuous.

What are your thoughts?

¹ Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. ² Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved. Teach and urge these things.

1 Timothy 6:1-2

In 1 Timothy 6, Paul turns his attention to the issue of slavery. Slavery in NT times was not at all like slavery as it was in early US history. Slaves were looked at treated much better in ancient Israel. The Old Testament implies that some people, when given the opportunity to become free citizens, chose to remain slaves. (See Exodus 21.)

Paul's concern here is that slaves treat their masters well. In this way no bad report about the church will arise. In the same way Paul admonishes masters to treat their slaves well. The purpose for this is the same. Paul wants to preserve the reputation of the church.

Do you see your behavior as possibly affecting the reputation of the church? There are far too many examples of church leaders whose sin has resulted in serious harm to the church.

What do you think?

³ If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, ⁴ he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, ⁵ and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. ⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

1 Timothy 6:3-10

Paul acknowledges that there will be those who won't agree with him as he brings God's word. He lets Timothy know that he must remain firm in defending the gospel and the truth that it contains.

The role of pastor is most difficult indeed. A pastor must be loving, gracious and kind; AND at the same time s/he must boldly and forcefully oppose any form of ungodliness especially in the church.

Verse 6 is perhaps one of the best known and well loved in all of scripture. Always behave in ways that are consistent with godliness. Be content in the station where God has you in life. To do this is truly to have great gain.

In regards to contentment, we must especially beware of the attraction of money. There are many threats to our walk with God should we pursue money.

What is your take?

¹¹ But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, ¹⁴ to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which he will display at the proper time-- he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

1 Timothy 6:11-16

Having warned Timothy about the things he should avoid, he continues encouraging Timothy by reminding him about the things he should pursue.

Both aspects of Paul's instructions are important. Many people think that Christianity is about prohibitions – don't do this and don't do that. However, this is a misunderstanding of our faith. Yes, we should avoid all those things that scripture warns of; but scripture also shows us many positive ways to behave that are in keeping with Christian living. Most importantly, believing in the Name of Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

The Christian life is about pursuing Him with a sincere heart.

What are your thoughts?

¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Paul reaffirms that point he just made to Timothy. Money can be a powerful force that can keep people from ever coming to Christ. Jesus, Himself, warned about this when He taught His disciples:

²³ And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" ²⁴ And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁶ And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God." Mark 10:23-27

Many of us today, especially in the US, live lives of incredible wealth as compared to most people in most places throughout the history of the world. We may not consider ourselves wealthy but we are!

Be aware of the threat that money can pose to your walk with Jesus.

Do not allow it to hinder your desire for God and all that He has in store for you!

Reflect on your view of money, and what priority it holds in your heart. Pray on these things.

²⁰O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," ²¹for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you. 1 Timothy 6:20-21

Paul closes his first epistle to Timothy with a statement that summarizes the letter. Hold fast to the good. Avoid fruitless "knowledge" which has, and still can, swerve some from the faith.

Keep your eye on the prize and never look back. Here is the reason that we should daily make time for prayer and meditation. By doing so, you make it a habit to reaffirm your faith. You anchor yourself all the more firmly in the word and in Him who is able to keep you from all harm!

Write some of your thoughts here.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus, ² To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. ³ I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. ⁴ As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. 2 Timothy 1:1-5

Paul begins his second letter to Timothy much like he began the first. He mentions again that he loves Timothy as his own son. In verse 5, he mentions Timothy's strong faith which he says was also in his mother and grandmother. Paul reminds Timothy that he is looking forward to being able to spend time with him as soon as he can.

Do you have people in your life with whom you have a loving relationship as Paul did with Timothy? Do you let them know regularly how you feel about them?

Do you plan specific times to spend with these people? If not, might this be something worth doing?

Whats your take?

⁶For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. ⁸Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, 2 Timothy 1:6-8

Paul encourages Timothy to do what he can to make better and better use of the gift that God has given to him. He admonishes Timothy to not be afraid but to be motivated by love and self-control. Although it may be painful to do so,

Paul encourages him to “share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God!”

Are you actively seeking new and better ways to exercise the spiritual gift that God has given to you? Don't bury your talent! If necessary, allow the limits of your comfort zone to be challenged.

Use your gifts as God intends and watch how you will grow and be encouraged in your faith; and you will rejoice to see others blessed as God uses you! In our walk with the Lord, there is no standing still. We are always either advancing or retreating. Which way are you moving in this season?

⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, ¹¹ for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, **2 Timothy 1:9-11**

God's purposes were established before the ages began. Before time as we know it started, God had a determined plan for your life. You have the ability to refuse His plan if you so choose.

If you do refuse Him, He will still accomplish His purposes, though through someone else; and your opportunity will have passed by. Be assured that God knows what He is doing. He is always working all things together for the good for those who love Him and seek His leading in their lives.

Do all you can to strengthen your confidence in Him. Allow Him to live through you. When you do this you will have life abundantly!

What are your thoughts?

What struck you most in this week's readings from 1-2 Timothy?

What questions or comments did you come away with?

How does what you learned relate to your life?

How does it relate to the Church family?

Notes from Home Church.

¹² which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. ¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

2 Timothy 1:12-14

Paul continues to exhort Timothy by explaining to him how Paul himself has dealt with the challenges he has encountered along the way. Verse 13 surely is good advice,

“Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me.”

We are challenged to do the same thing. Scripture, the words of Paul and other writers, is composed of sound words whose true author is God Himself. Devote yourself to knowing scripture better. More than that, devote yourself to living scripture better so that you can be a more effective minister for God.

Write some of your thoughts here.

¹⁵ You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶ May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, ¹⁷ but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me-- ¹⁸ may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day!-- and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

2 Timothy 1:15-18

Paul informs Timothy about how things are going with him. He mentions several people by name so that Timothy will be aware of who turned their back on him. It is important that Timothy know these things so that if any of these should visit Ephesus, Timothy will know how to receive them.

This is as true today as it was in Paul's day. No pastor should blindly receive anyone who claims to be a minister of the gospel. First, the pastor should do all he can to check a person out well before allowing them to speak in the church.

The same principle applies for believers. Don't believe everyone you hear. Do what you can to check the validity of the matters brought to your attention. If you don't check things out first you run the risk of causing bigger problems. As we saw in 1 John, we should always "test the spirits to see whether they are from God."

What is your experience with this?

¹You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ²and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. ³Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. ⁵An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. ⁷Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. ⁸Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!

2 Timothy 2:1-9

Paul quickly covers a lot of ground as he summarizes much of the teaching he wants to leave with Timothy. In verses 1-2, Paul encourages Timothy to find faithful men who will be able to share in the work that Timothy is doing. The implication for us is clear. Don't be a lone cowboy. You do well to find people who share your gifting. Working together with them you may be able to accomplish far more than you could by each working alone.

In verse 3, he reminds Timothy that suffering for the sake of the gospel is part of being a minister.

Don't be surprised if you are called upon to suffer in some way for the sake of the gospel.

In verse 4, he admonishes Timothy to make his ministry the main focus of his life. If we get involved in too many different things we may find ourselves in a place where we can't accomplish very much in any one area. Don't neglect your ministry by overfilling your life with too many things to do.

Paul tells Timothy in verse 5 that the ends do not justify the means. We seek the goal of God's holiness. It can be reached only if we are holy in all we do. Paul also tells Timothy to be hard working - that's the only way to succeed. Paul ends this section by commanding Timothy to remember Jesus Christ.

As you go through your daily life, keep the main thing the main thing! Remember the center of your life and don't allow any circumstance to move you away from that!

¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. ¹¹ The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; ¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; ¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful-- for he cannot deny himself. ¹⁴ Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. ¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. ¹⁶ But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, ¹⁷ and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸ who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. 2 Timothy 2:10-18

In verses 10-11, Paul reminds Timothy of the reason why they must fulfill their call from God. Their goal is that God's people will come to a saving relationship with the Father through the Son. That is a worthy goal indeed!

In verse 12 Paul continues encouraging Timothy to endure. No one wants to make a good start only to fail in the end. We must commit ourselves into the care and leading of the Spirit so that we will be enabled to accomplish all that God asks of us. Verse 15 is another of the best known of all scriptures:

“We must be able to accurately handle the word of God.”

This is a lifelong task. We must study scripture in order to know it well. Then we must apply it consistently throughout life. Be encouraged by this. God, through His Holy Spirit, is working to help you in this!

Note verses 16-18 contain a warning about the fate of those who have “gone astray.”

What are your thoughts?

¹⁹ But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." ²⁰ Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. ²¹ Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work. ²² So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. ²³ Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. ²⁴ And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, ²⁵ correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

2 Timothy 2:19-26

In verses 19-21, Paul reminds Timothy that though we were once slaves to sin and displeasing to God, we are now cleansed and are "useful to the master of the house." God has indeed renewed us through the sacrifice of His Son. Having been cleansed, each of us is now "a vessel for honorable use."

Paul continues with, "flee youthful passions." Truly, at each stage of life there are different issues that can arise to tempt us. At any age we should keep Christ the center of our focus. In Him alone will we find purpose for our lives.

In verses 23-26, Paul again lets Timothy know that he must avoid arguing with the vain philosophies that were being propagated in the Roman Empire. Perhaps, Paul says, those who hold to these Greek philosophies "may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil." That remains our hope. That as we minister faithfully to the calling God has given, people will repent and come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

¹But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ²For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. ⁶For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, ⁷always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. ⁸Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. ⁹But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.

2 Timothy 3:1-9

Paul paints an accurate picture of the sinful world we live in and how Satan will use it to try to keep people separated from God. He continues with an extensive list of several characteristics of godless people, and tells us how such people behave and what they experience.

We actually see the names two men who behaved in these ways and verse 9 tells us what their ultimate fate will be.

Do you see such activity in the world today? Be assured that without faith in Jesus, the end for all such people will be similar to the end of those Paul mentions here!

¹⁰ You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ¹¹ my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra-- which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. ¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:10-17

Here Paul reminds Timothy that persecution is to be expected. Evil intensifies, and those under this power “go from bad to worse.” So it’s all the more important for us to focus on God and His calling in our lives. We are responsible to use our time well.

Only what we will do for Christ will have eternal consequences.

Everything else is passing away. So make the main thing the main thing. Verse 16 is yet another of the best known verses in the bible. Truly all of scripture is inspired by God. It is His message to us, and we are reminded that it is through scripture that we “may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

What are your thoughts?

¹I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ²preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. ⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

2 Timothy 4:1-8

Paul is coming to the close of this letter. He will highlight a few important ideas for Timothy before he ends the letter. "Be ready in season and out of season." We must be prepared always to give a good defense of our faith. Paul continues describing how many will not listen to sound teaching but will prefer to listen to those who "suit their own passions." We need to be careful how we use scripture. It is easy to see in scripture what you want to see. We must approach scripture on its terms.

Paul tells Timothy that his (Paul's) own earthly life is nearing an end, yet he is sure of his fate – that he will be rewarded. How marvelous for Paul to be approaching his death with such confidence. Even as the end draws near he is still involved in the work of ensuring that the gospel message is spread by faithful people. To the very end, Paul continues living out the gift that God has given to him. May we be found so faithful!

Write some of your thoughts here.

⁹ Do your best to come to me soon. ¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. ¹² Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. ¹³ When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. ¹⁴ Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. ¹⁵ Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. **2 Timothy 4:9-15**

Paul informs Timothy of several others that he thinks Timothy should know about. He wants Timothy to know these folks' reputations – whether good or bad.

Paul is setting an example for us. We should stay in touch with one another and keep up our communication. We encourage and support one another as we do.

Life in the kingdom is life in community!

Write some of your thoughts here.

¹⁶At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! ¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. ¹⁹Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. ²⁰Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus. ²¹Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers. ²²The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

2 Timothy 4:16-22

Paul closes this letter by letting Timothy know that everyone has deserted him except the Lord. He asks for God's protection and encourages Timothy to visit him as soon as he can.

Paul valued the friendships in his life. He valued most especially those who were ministers of the gospel as he was. Its not surprising to see that he is hoping to see Timothy one more time.

I think we would do well to imitate Paul by finding like-minded friends. I have one or two friends like this, and it is always a joy to get together and discuss what and where God has been speaking to us of late. I hope that you experience the blessing of this type of friendship.

What are your thoughts? Think of who you would call a close friend? Is there someone you would like to pursue a friendship with?

Bring these things to the Lord in prayer.