

Shepherding Notes

1 Timothy

By Marco Rosero

Paul introduces himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ, emphasizing his authority and credentials. 1 Timothy was written by Paul to his beloved son, Timothy, during his stay in Macedonia, shortly after being released from his imprisonment in Rome. Paul had returned to the city of Ephesus and discovered that, during his absence, it had become the epicenter of false teachings. He left Timothy in charge of the church in Ephesus as his personal representative, knowing that the task would be difficult.

Guard Sound Doctrine

Paul was concerned that Timothy do everything possible to ensure the Ephesians remained in the doctrine he had received from Jesus and the Old Testament. He urged Timothy, in verses 3–7, to instruct certain individuals to stop teaching false doctrines — specifically "fables and endless genealogies" that promoted disputes rather than godly edification. He emphasized the importance of sound doctrine and warned against speculative and meaningless discussions. The reference to the "doctors of the law" denounces the activity that the Judaizers were promoting in the Asian churches.

In verses 8–11, Paul explains that the law is good when used lawfully, but its purpose is not to make the righteous more righteous. Instead, it is meant to show the lawlessness and sinfulness of transgressions. In Paul's mind, sound doctrine and right behavior are vitally connected — orthodoxy and orthopraxy go together.

Paul's Testimony

Paul shares his testimony in verses 12–16, describing himself as a former blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent man who obtained mercy because he acted ignorantly in unbelief. He felt that his sins were particularly grievous because he was responsible for the death, imprisonment, and suffering of Christians he had persecuted before his life was changed by Jesus. He thanks Christ Jesus for enabling him and counting him faithful.

Paul summarizes the gospel message, stating that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom he considers himself the chief. Paul could not think about how bad he was, how great God's salvation was, and how immense God's love is, without falling into spontaneous praise. He says in verse 17: "To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

Fight the Good Fight

With these words, Paul gave Timothy another reason to stay in Ephesus. Timothy probably wanted to leave and his ministry because he felt unworthy or incapable of the work. However, Paul's words encouraged him — he had a job in front of him, and it was to go into the battlefield. It wasn't going to be easy, comfortable, or worry-free. He had to approach the work just as a soldier approaches the battle.

Paul encouraged Timothy to keep his faith and good conscience, which some had discarded. Those who reject what Jesus and His apostles taught are heading to ruin — as was the case with Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom Paul had to hand over to Satan so that they might learn not to blaspheme.

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Pray for All People

Paul exhorted the church in Ephesus — which had apparently stopped praying for the lost — to prioritize this practice again. The false teachers of Judaism had introduced a perverted gospel, teaching that salvation was only for Jews and proselytes among the Gentiles. They likely also prohibited evangelistic prayers, leading the church to believe that prayer for the lost was unnecessary.

Paul urges believers to pray for those in positions of authority — those with political and military power, even if they are hostile to the gospel — so that they may repent and embrace it. God calls us to pray for everyone, as we do not know who He has chosen to be saved. Prayer for authorities must always be evangelistic, with the goal that they come under Jesus' authority and make decisions that allow the gospel to be preached freely.

One Mediator

Paul wants everyone to come to the knowledge of the truth, and that truth is Jesus — for He is the only way, the only mediator between God and men. There is no other valid path to God except through Jesus. Paul's statement simply repeats what Jesus said in John 14:6: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me." Jesus gave Himself as a ransom, as payment for our sins. He took our place, receiving the punishment and wrath of God the Father that we deserved. He is the only one who can restore peace between us and God. This is the fundamental message of the gospel.

Order in Worship

Paul assumes that men would take the initiative in the congregation's meetings, which is why he advocates for men to lead in teaching when the church gathers. God has designated men as leaders during corporate worship meetings. Whenever prayer is offered for the lost, men must lead it. Such prayers must be without anger, contention, or lack of faith.

The women in the church of Ephesus were apparently living impure, self-centered lives, and this practice was reflected in their worship meetings, where they distracted others. Paul calls on Timothy to address the issue. He teaches that women must be properly dressed — the clothing of a Christian woman should be modest and without ostentation,

so as not to draw attention to themselves and distract others from focusing on the Lord. According to Paul, the best ornament for those who profess godliness is good works.

Roles in the Church

Paul teaches about the role of women in public worship, stating that while women cannot teach or hold authority over men in the gathered church, they should not be excluded from learning. This does not mean women cannot teach in other settings — Priscilla and Aquila, for example, instructed Apollos privately — but the roles of elder and pastor-teacher are reserved for men.

Paul establishes the subordinate role of women within God's original creation order, arguing that Adam was created first, then Eve. God made the woman to be Adam's ideal helper, reflecting divine order. The woman's role is part of God's purpose, not a consequence of the Fall. The Fall resulted not only from disobeying God's command but also from violating the roles He established for them.

"There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all." — 1 Timothy 2:5-6

Paul moves from addressing the congregation to discussing those responsible for teaching and leading the church. One of Timothy's tasks was to restore proper spiritual leadership by appointing elders and deacons based on the guidelines Paul had given him. Leadership in Ephesus had been corrupted — some were teaching false doctrines, others misused the law or misunderstood the gospel. Paul makes it clear that not every man is qualified just because he is a man. Leading a church is a good, noble, and honorable responsibility — one reserved for men with blameless character.

Qualifications for Elders

In verses 1–7, Paul outlines the qualities required for pastors. The term "bishop" means supervisor, and in the New Testament, the terms bishop, elder, and pastor are used interchangeably to refer to the same leaders with different responsibilities.

The first requirement for an elder is to be above reproach — he should have no known sin or accusations that damage his reputation. He must be faithful to one wife, showing moral and sexual integrity. Because many leaders fall in this area, it is listed first. An elder must be sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, and hospitable, welcoming both friends and strangers into his home. He must be able to teach — this is the main difference between an elder and a deacon. Elders need a strong understanding of Scripture so they can teach it clearly and defend it against false teachings.

An elder must not be a drunkard, not violent, but gentle, not argumentative, and not greedy. He must manage his household well — if a man cannot lead his own family, he is not ready to lead the church of God. An elder should not be a recent convert, since giving leadership to someone without spiritual maturity can lead to pride, which was the downfall of the devil. Elders must also have a good reputation even among non-believers.

Qualifications for Deacons

After listing the qualifications for elders, Paul turns to deacons. Although elders lead and deacons serve, the spiritual standards are the same for both. A deacon must be serious, trustworthy, consistent, and honest. Like elders, deacons must avoid excessive drinking and must not use their position for personal gain. They must clearly understand and uphold the gospel. Before serving, deacon candidates must first be tested. Though their work may often go unnoticed, Paul encourages them to serve faithfully, promising they will earn a respected place through their service.

The Pillar and Foundation of Truth

After giving Timothy specific instructions on prayer, worship, and church leadership, Paul explains his purpose for writing. He wanted to give practical guidance for leading the church in Ephesus. Paul reminds us that the church belongs to God — it is not a human organization, but one that God established. He has appointed elders and deacons to guide and teach the church, which Paul calls the pillar and foundation of the truth. The church's mission is to publicly uphold and defend God's truth as revealed in the Scriptures.

Paul then quotes what may be an early Christian hymn or confession of faith, reflecting the heart of the gospel: the church is entrusted with proclaiming the mystery of godliness — Jesus Christ, who was revealed in the flesh to remove our sins. Though treated as a sinner and crucified, He was raised by the Spirit, proving that He was innocent. Angels witnessed His ascension, and His exaltation showed the Father's full approval. His gospel has been preached among all nations so that even the Gentiles might believe and be saved.

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The Danger of False Doctrine

By returning to the reason he left Timothy in Ephesus, Paul continues to confront the false teachers and their teachings. Paul had already warned about apostasy and false teachers in Acts 20. The phrase "last times" refers to the period between Jesus' first coming and His return. Paul says that some people will abandon sound teaching — these are people who were never truly saved but lived among believers for a time. Eventually, they will be led astray by false teachers who deceive them with teachings that come from Satan himself.

These false doctrines came from legalistic teachers who claimed that people could be made right with God by following man-made rules — for example, that avoiding marriage and certain foods made someone holier. But it is important to understand that celibacy or dietary restrictions do not have the power to save or make someone more holy. These teachings went against Scripture, because God created both marriage and food to be enjoyed with thankfulness by believers. These gifts are made holy through prayer and the Word of God.

Train Yourself for Godliness

After exposing the false teachers, Paul gives Timothy personal instructions for his ministry. He urges Timothy to stay committed to teaching sound doctrine. A pastor's main job is to teach and guide the believers, but to do that, Timothy must stay nourished by the Word of God. His focus should be on Scripture, not on human ideas or opinions.

In ancient Greek and Roman culture, physical exercise was highly valued. Paul tells Timothy that the same effort people put into physical training should be put into growing in godliness. Physical exercise is good for the body for a short time, but training in godliness benefits us forever.

It is important to clarify that when Paul says God is the Savior of the whole world, he is not teaching universalism — the idea that everyone will be saved. Paul's point is that God's grace frees believers from judgment and eternal punishment because Jesus took our place and suffered for us. At the same time, God shows kindness to all people, even those who do not believe. Non-believers receive God's common grace — His mercy, compassion, the call to repent, and the gospel invitation offered to everyone.

Set an Example

Timothy was a young minister who seemed afraid to teach with authority in the church. Paul gives him a strong command — not to just suggest things, but to give clear direction and call people to obey, teaching all of God's instructions. In Greek culture, age and experience were highly respected. Since Timothy was young, he had to earn respect by living a godly life. He needed to set an example in how he spoke, live honestly and fairly, be willing to sacrifice for others, stay faithful to the gospel, and live a pure life.

Paul also encourages Timothy to focus on publicly reading the Word of God, then explaining it and giving practical advice. To encourage him, Paul reminds him of the spiritual gift he received when he became a believer — gifts for leadership, preaching, and teaching. Paul warns Timothy to watch over his own life and teaching carefully. Every pastor must regularly check these two areas because ignoring them puts both the leader and the church at risk.

"Train yourself for godliness — 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." — 1 Timothy 4:7-8

Treating Different Groups with Care

In this chapter, Paul teaches several important lessons for the church and its leaders. He begins by telling Timothy how to treat different groups. Older men should be corrected with respect, like a father — not with harsh or disrespectful words. Paul isn't saying older men should never be corrected, but that it must be done gently. Timothy is told to encourage younger men as brothers — treating them as equals and partners in ministry. Older women should be treated like mothers, reflecting the fifth commandment to honor your parents. Younger women should be treated like sisters, with absolute purity — Paul emphasizes this especially for pastors, since relationships with young women can present temptations if not handled carefully.

Caring for Widows

Paul also gives guidance on caring for widows. Widows who are truly alone and in need should be honored and supported by the church. However, if a widow has family who can care for her, they should take that responsibility. A true widow has no one but God to depend on, and she shows her faith through prayer and a godly life. Paul also says that such widows can be added to an official list, but only if they meet certain qualifications: they must be at least 60 years old, faithful to their husbands, and known for raising their children well. They should also be kind, hospitable, humble, and willing to serve others.

Paul tells Timothy not to include younger widows on the list of those who serve in the church, for two reasons: their commitment may not last, and because of their youth and inexperience, they may become idle and get involved in things they should not. Instead, Paul encourages young widows to remarry — to avoid falling into sin and to focus on building a home again. Paul's warning was timely, since some women had already strayed from the truth and were helping to spread false teachings.

Honoring Elders

Paul gives instructions on how to properly honor church elders and how to deal with those who fall into sin. All elders — whether teaching or ruling — who serve faithfully should be properly honored and supported. The phrase "double honor" refers not just to respect but also to fair compensation. Paul backs this up by quoting Scripture: Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7. His point is clear — those who work hard in ministry

deserve the support they need.

Paul also gives guidance on how to handle sin among elders. He refers to the same process Jesus taught in Matthew 18:15–20. Paul's goal is to protect elders from false or careless accusations — that is why any accusation must be confirmed by two or more witnesses. If the accusation is true and the elder continues in sin after being confronted, the issue should be brought before the whole church so the congregation can call the elder to repentance. These steps must be followed without favoritism — no one is above discipline.

To prevent unqualified men from becoming elders, Paul warns against rushing to ordain anyone. The laying on of hands should come only after careful examination. Appointing someone too quickly can make those involved share responsibility for that person's future sins.

"Those who work hard in ministry deserve the support they need. Double honor — both respect and fair compensation — is owed to those who lead the church faithfully."

Godliness with Contentment

In the first two verses, Paul instructs servants to respect their masters, work hard, and be obedient — not as an endorsement of servitude, but so that God's name and teaching would be honored. These same principles apply to us today in the workplace. When we are respectful and responsible employees, we bring glory to God. But if we are lazy or disrespectful, we dishonor His name. The world watches how believers live, not just in church but in everyday life.

Paul once again warns about false teachers, especially highlighting their divisive nature and greed. These people preach a different message — not the true gospel. They are proud of what they claim to know, but in reality they understand very little. Instead of focusing on the truth, they argue about words and ideas they don't fully grasp, using complex language to appear wise. This leads to conflict, slander, and pointless arguments. They twist the gospel into a way to make money. Paul tells Timothy to stay away from such people.

True godliness does bring great gain — but not material gain. It brings spiritual benefits that are valuable for this life and the next. Godliness must be joined with contentment. Believers should be thankful and satisfied with what God has already given them. After all, we came into the world with nothing and we will leave the same way.

The Danger of Loving Money

Wealth itself is not wrong. The Bible mentions many faithful people who were wealthy, like Abraham, David, and Solomon. The real danger is not money, but the desire to be rich. This desire can affect both the poor and the wealthy — it pulls people away from God and traps them in harmful temptations. It is the love of money — not money itself — that leads many away from the faith. This craving for wealth is a common trait among false teachers.

Paul urges Timothy to stay strong in his faith, even during persecution and hardship, and to avoid the pursuit of material wealth. Timothy must not only flee from sin but actively pursue a life of holiness. Paul uses military language to describe the spiritual battle they are in. He commands Timothy to obey God's Word faithfully and to live a life that is pure and blameless until the return of Jesus Christ. Paul describes God as the King of kings and

Lord of lords, the only one who is immortal and lives in unapproachable light.

Instructions to the Rich

Paul instructs the rich not to be proud or to put their trust in wealth, which is uncertain and can disappear. Instead, they should trust in God, who gives us everything we need. He encourages them to do good, be rich in good works, and give generously. Wealth should not be seen as an end in itself, but as a tool to serve God's purposes and help others. True wealth, Paul says, is not measured by material possessions but by a generous and godly life. Our resources should be used to honor God and bless others.

Paul also warns Timothy about false teachings that claim to be knowledge but are actually against the truth of the gospel. These can lead people away from the faith. Timothy is urged to guard the message of the gospel and keep it pure and unchanged.

"Godliness with contentment is great gain. We brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of it. It is the love of money – not money itself – that is the root of all kinds of evils."