

Theme. The theme of 1 Timothy is leadership. Godly leaders are necessary, even critical, to the health, mission, and growth of the church. Jesus spent three full years training the disciples, who were about to become the leaders of his church. And so, we see in Paul's pastoral letters, of which 1 Timothy is the first, Paul's concern that the young leaders he was training exhibit Christ-like leadership. Sound leaders produce sound followers who soon become sound leaders for other sound followers. Read 1 Timothy with its lessons for leaders in mind. At some level and at some point, we are each a leader within Christ's church.

Author. Paul wrote 1 Timothy later in his ministry, around 64 A.D., just before his final Rome imprisonment. The book of Acts shows that Paul had met the respected young Christ-follower Timothy in Lystra, in Asia Minor, a decade earlier. Writing 1 Timothy so late in his life, Paul exhibits a more-reflective tone, showing greater care for how others will lead than for his own leadership the end of which was so near. Read more about Paul in the above section on his letter to the Romans.

Audience. In 1 Timothy, Paul addresses his young protégé, the son and grandson of godly Jewish women who had accepted Christ, raising Timothy in the faith as among the first of the second-generation Christians. Timothy, though young, had substantial responsibility as the pastor of the church that Paul had served at Ephesus. When Rome released Paul from his first imprisonment, likely in 62 A.D., Paul had traveled to the church in Ephesus, soon placing Timothy in leadership there. Ephesus was a challenging place to build a church, as the home of one of the seven wonders of the world, an enormous temple to the mother goddess known to the Romans as Diana and to the Greeks as Artemis. That temple was a place of extraordinary sexual indulgence. Timothy thus faced considerable challenges both within the body of believers, to maintain the body's morality and unity, and from without, to resist the surrounding culture's pressure while helping the members endure popular persecution. These challenges made Paul's advice in 1 Timothy especially worthwhile counsel for those whose first concern is with leadership within the church.

Structure. Paul offers a three-part structure in 1 Timothy, beginning in chapter one with *what* a leader should teach. Paul gives Timothy fatherly counsel first confirming Timothy in the faith but then warning him about the peril of false teachers, a warning that Paul amplifies later in the letter. The next part of Paul's letter, comprised of chapters two and three, articulates *how* a leader should teach, in prayer and modesty, while living a disciplined life pleasing to God. Paul's third part, comprised of chapters four through six, articulates the *heart* of godly leadership, in which the leader puts hope in the living God, Christ the Savior. During these leadership lessons, Paul instructs in orderly and unified public

worship, and counsels on the qualifications of church elders and deacons. Paul thus coaches Timothy in how to build and maintain character among leaders and order in the church body. The letter includes substantial advice on pastoral care before concluding with exhortations to encourage the young pastor in his own motives, character, ministry, and faith. The letter remains core counsel for church leaders, surely as important of a witness to the Holy Spirit today as it was for the young Timothy.

Application. Paul exhorts Timothy, in verse 4:13, to devote himself to public reading of scripture, and to preaching and teaching. That advice is key for any leader, that they share and adhere to God's word. No leader is sound without God's word at the fore of the leader's thought, talk, and action. Sound doctrine forms a core for sound leadership. Then, as leaders, we should follow that doctrine ourselves, in self-control and discipline. Leaders must not stray while keeping the flock on its narrow path. Finally, we should do those things—teach and preach, and maintain good personal conduct—because we hope in Christ Jesus. Leadership has no mystery to it. Leadership depends on the same thing that other good conduct depends, which is the heart of Christ.

Memory Verses. *2:1: I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.... 2:5: For there is one God and one mediator between God and human beings, Christ Jesus, himself human.... 3:1: Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. 3:16: Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory. 4:1: The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.*