

# 1 TIMOTHY THROUGH TITUS

WESLEY BIBLE STUDIES



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# INTRODUCTION

*Order in the Church*

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We wouldn't want to check into a disorganized hospital for surgery. Whatever pre-op apprehension we carried into the hospital would multiply greatly if it became apparent that no one on staff knew what he or she was supposed to do. "Let's see now," the registration clerk might say. "Am I supposed to look at your medical insurance card or your appendix?" How would we feel if we learned the surgeon had never attended medical school and had just been released from jail for driving under the influence? How quickly would we run from the hospital if garbage littered the halls?

Surely, no church resembles the hospital described in that hypothetical condition, but, like a hospital, a church must be well-organized, have a squeaky clean reputation, and be staffed by qualified leaders. After all, the spiritual health of all who worship there—even the eternal destiny of some—is at stake.

First and 2 Timothy and Titus contain significant instructions for establishing and maintaining orderly churches that receive the Lord's approval.

## ORDERLY LIVES

Paul, the writer of the inspired letters of 1–2 Timothy and Titus, listed God's qualifications for church leaders. Timothy and Titus were young men who faced serious challenges as they organized churches at Ephesus and Crete respectively. False

teachers threatened the faith of God’s people, and the temptation to lust for possessions and wealth was strong. Unless the churches’ leaders were strong in the faith and firmly focused on spiritual values, the rank and file of believers might lapse into doctrinal error and materialism. As we survey the leadership qualifications Paul listed, our appreciation of our spiritual leaders will grow.

### **ORDERLY PRAYERS**

How should we pray? First Timothy 2:1–8 tells us to pray for everyone. We should approach God on behalf of those who hold positions of governmental authority. We should offer “requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving” (1 Tim. 2:1). And we should support our prayers with a holy lifestyle. It may seem hard to pray for political rulers whose values differ from our own, but our prayers for them contribute to a peaceful, quiet life. It also helps us pray for them knowing that God “wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (v. 4).

### **ORDERLY WORSHIP**

Congregations may never agree on how many hymns or choruses to sing in a worship service, but there should be unanimous agreement about the guidelines for worship. It should be holy, and nothing should distract from it. Furthermore, the preaching and teaching of sound doctrine is essential to holy worship. Paul instructed both Timothy and Titus to preach and teach sound doctrine (2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 2:1).

### **ORDERLY DISCIPLINE**

Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus offer wise instructions on how to deal with difficult people. Today, self-centeredness and super-sensitive feelings often conflict with straightforward preaching, and as a result, people become unruly. Not surprisingly, they malign the pastor. Paul warned Timothy and Titus

about troublemakers. He told Timothy to “have nothing to do with them” (2 Tim. 3:5), and he told Titus, “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him” (Titus 3:10).

As you go through this study, you will gain a deeper appreciation for the church, its leaders, its character, its purpose, and your role in it. The world seems to be in its worst condition these days. Therefore, the church—all believers—needs to be at our best, leading a holy life and proclaiming the holy gospel.

## STEPS TOWARD FAITHFUL DISCIPLESHIP

*1 Timothy 4:1–16*

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Living a balanced life is key to being a faithful disciple.

Every day, gyms and fitness centers are crowded. Some exercise zealots spend an hour pumping iron or riding a stationary bike after work. Others jog a couple of miles or more, return home to clean up, and then leave for work. Regular exercise is commendable and profitable, but according to 1 Timothy 4:8, “godliness has value for all things.”

Godliness, built on sound doctrine, would enable Timothy to ward off harmful teachings. It would also enable him to lead an exemplary life and have an effective ministry. This study will help you to stay focused on what matters most in life.

### COMMENTARY

Timothy might well be called the son of the apostle Paul. Indeed, Paul referred to him in just such endearing terms in Philippians 2:19–22. Introduced to Timothy during a visit to Timothy’s hometown of Lystra during his second missionary journey (Acts 16), Paul recognized in the young man the qualities of faith and godliness necessary for church leadership. Timothy was the son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father, so Paul had him circumcised in order that he might be accepted among the Jews through whom the gospel message was first disseminated. From this point forward, Timothy was a trusted companion and emissary of Paul.

While often mentioned with others of Paul’s helpers (see Acts 17–19; Rom. 16), it is Timothy who was consistently by Paul’s

side or representing Paul to the churches. Paul sent Timothy to the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 4:17) and to the Thessalonian church (1 Thess. 3:2–6). Timothy was with Paul at the writing of the second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 1:1), both letters to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1), and letters to the churches in Philippi (Phil. 1:1; 2:19) and Colosse (Col. 1:1). Paul gave Timothy a special commendation when he told the church in Philippi that he had “no one else like [Timothy], who takes a genuine interest in your welfare” (Phil. 2:20).

It is no surprise, then, that Paul wanted to provide special instructions for this son in the faith. He was Paul’s protégé, and Paul had a personal interest in Timothy’s effectiveness. This sense of responsibility for the young pastor pervades the letters to Timothy and the instructions and warnings contained therein. Paul’s charge to Timothy to “watch your life and doctrine closely” (4:16) conveyed the passion of a father, mentor, and spiritual authority.

Like the rest of the letter, 1 Timothy 4 includes instructions to Timothy, both as a believer and church leader. After all, the compartmentalization of one’s life and ministry into separate categories is impossible. The minister of Christ bears certain responsibilities for leadership. But all leadership begins with the character of the leader. Thus, Paul’s instructions to Timothy blended the personal and pastoral dimensions. This unique blending has led the Christian church to use the latter part of the chapter in its instruction of candidates for the ministry.

### **False Teachers (1 Tim. 4:1–5)**

The initial verses of chapter 4 focus the concern of the entire letter: watch out for false teachers. The letter both begins (1:3–4) and ends (6:20–21) with similar warnings. Paul pointed out that some believers **will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits** (4:1). This apostasy (abandoning of the faith) was predicted throughout the New Testament, both by Christ (Mark 13:22) and

in other letters (see 2 Thess. 2:4; 1 John 2:28). The cause of the apostasy described here is heretical teachings that, according to Paul, came directly from demons.

Two particular heretical teachings are outlined in this passage. Both are prohibitions: the first against marriage and the second related to the eating of certain foods. Both prohibitions are identifiable with a heretical teaching prevalent in the first centuries of Christianity (and today) known as Gnosticism. Gnosticism is rooted in a philosophical dualism (a system of thought with more or less equal, opposing forces) that sees matter (the body) as evil and spirit (one's spiritual essence or soul) as good. If the body is evil, it follows logically that all things that feed the appetites of the body are evil. Thus, the satisfaction of sexual desires and the natural desires for fine food and drink must be inherently evil. This kind of Gnostic philosophy leads to asceticism, the denial of one's physical desires in order to free one's spirit from bondage to the evil desires of the flesh.

While God expects us to live temperate lives (1 Thess. 5:6–8; Titus 2:2–3, 12) and sometimes calls us to abstain or fast from certain pleasures for a time (1 Cor. 7:5; Matt. 6:16–17), the Bible does not suggest that the body is inherently evil. The philosophy of Gnosticism is fundamentally flawed. The Scripture proclaims that God is the creator of all good things and His good gifts should be thankfully accepted (1 Tim. 4:4). That this philosophy was a constant source of heresy in the early church is evident from various New Testament Scriptures that refute its tenets. Especially prevalent are attempts to counter the strict prohibitions related to eating certain foods (often derived from Jewish restrictions about meat offered to idols; see especially Rom. 14:14; 1 Cor. 8:7; Col. 2:16). If **received with thanksgiving** and **consecrated by the word of God and prayer** (1 Tim. 4:4–5), God's good gifts become holy (that is, consecrated, sanctified) to those who receive them. Verses 4–5 are often used to provide support for “giving thanks” before eating.

WORDS FROM WESLEY

1 Timothy 4:5

*It is sanctified by the word of God—*Creating all, and giving it to man for food: *and by prayer—*The children of God are to pray for the sanctification of all the creatures which they use. And not only the Christians, but even the Jews, yea the very heathens used to consecrate their table by prayer. (ENNT)

**Training in Godliness (1 Tim. 4:6–10)**

Doctrine is important. Those who **point . . . out** (v. 6) the matters described in verses 1–5 (and perhaps all the preceding portion of the letter) are identified as **good ministers** (v. 6). Paul further described the good minister as one who has been **brought up in the truths of the faith**, following **good teaching**, or doctrine (v. 6). The intent here is not to suggest that a person must be a third- or fourth-generation Christian to be a good minister. Rather, one must be thoroughly instructed in the truth and find regular nourishment and sustenance from God’s Word if he or she is to minister effectively for Christ. Good ministers must not be ones who simply spout **godless myths and old wives’ tales** (v. 7), but must know and expound the truths of the faith. They must be able to sort out truth from error and lead others to do the same. The critical task of the minister’s handling of the Word emerges again in the second letter to Timothy when Paul exhorted him in the careful handling of the Scripture: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

The metaphor Paul chose to convey the importance of discipleship is that of the gymnasium. Not unlike today, in the culture of the first century, athletic ability was prized, and physical training in the gymnasium was a rigorous discipline. In the days of

the original Olympic games, physical training was serious business. Thus, Paul’s metaphor does not negate the value of physical training, **for physical training is of some value** (1 Tim. 4:8). But it does limit that value to **the present life**.

However, **godliness has value for all things**, including **the life to come** (v. 8). And just as with physical training, to **train yourself to be godly** (v. 7) is serious business requiring significant discipline. As in other places (1 Cor. 9:24; Gal. 2:2; Phil. 2:16), Paul used the athletic metaphor to communicate the discipline required of Christ’s followers. Discipleship is not for the fainthearted. It requires high standards, unceasing effort, self-denial, and incredible focus. But the value of godliness knows no bounds, either in extent or duration.

To reinforce his emphasis on training in godliness, Paul used the formula of **a trustworthy saying** (1 Tim. 4:9), which he used at other places throughout these two letters to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11). Here it as an emphatic endnote to 1 Timothy 4:8. He was saying, “Pay attention! This is true and you must accept it!” Again highlighting the rigorous demands (**we labor and strive**), he pointed the young pastor to the source of hope: **the living God, who is the Savior of all men** (v. 10).

#### WORDS FROM WESLEY

*1 Timothy 4:10*

*Therefore*—Animated by this promise, *we both labour and suffer reproach*—We regard neither pleasure, ease, nor honour, *because we trust*—For this very thing the world will hate us, *in the living God*—Who will give us the life He has promised; *who is the Saviour of all men*—Preserving them in this life, and willing to save them eternally; *but especially*—In a more eminent manner, *of them that believe*—And so are saved everlastingly. (ENNT)

### Charge to Timothy (1 Tim. 4:11–16)

Paul began the chapter by warning about false teachers and teachings. Next he pointed out that the only answer to false teaching is the truth, which must be pursued with rigor in the training for godliness. Now the message is brought home in a personal way with very specific instructions and exhortations to Timothy.

The charge to Timothy? **Command and teach these things** (v. 11). The things Timothy was to teach are clearly noted, both in this chapter and throughout both letters. Verses 11–16 form a kind of preliminary conclusion to the entire letter to this point. Among the lessons are warnings against false teachings (1:1–11; 4:1–5), the mission of Christ to save sinners (1:15), the instructions about worship (ch. 2), the characteristics and responsibilities of church leaders (ch. 3), and our hope in a living God who is the Savior of all who believe (4:10). The “command and teach” formula is found throughout the letters to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:18; 3:14; 5:7; 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:14), giving the letters the flavor of a manual or discipline for church leaders.

Perhaps Timothy was a timid young man, or inclined to yield leadership to those of greater maturity. For whatever reason, Paul found it necessary to urge him to take hold of the leadership entrusted to him despite his age: **Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young** (1 Tim. 4:12). In the first century, the designation **young** might be applied to anyone of the age to serve in the military—up to age forty. Considering the fact that Paul was writing this letter well after meeting Timothy on his second missionary journey, it is likely that Timothy was somewhere in his thirties. The important thing is not his precise age, but Paul’s implication that spiritual maturity and leadership may not always be directly related to age. Instead, the markers of such maturity are exemplary **speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity** (v. 12). Pointing back to the training in godliness of verse 8, Paul urged Timothy to live in such a way that his exemplary

life would outweigh the fact that he was young. The young minister (servant) must earn his or her respect and right to lead by demonstrating the spiritual maturity necessary for that leadership.

Implying his authority over Timothy, Paul instructed the young pastor concerning specific leadership tasks to be performed until Paul came. These tasks included the **public reading of Scripture . . . preaching and . . . teaching** (v. 13). At the time of this letter, the public reading of Scripture meant the Old Testament. Today, of course, such reading also includes the New Testament. Preaching and teaching are likewise primary tasks of the minister. Paul affirmed Timothy's commission to fulfill these tasks by citing a time when the **elders** of the church **laid their hands on him** (v. 14), thus certifying the Lord's **gift** to Timothy for such leadership. The event described here probably parallels our contemporary ritual of ordination. Throughout biblical history, the laying on of hands has symbolized the communication of the Holy Spirit to the one on whom the hands were laid (Num. 8:10; Acts 8:17; 19:6; Heb. 6:2). Such an event was a solemn occasion, always including fervent prayer for the Spirit to empower the person to live the kind of life described above (see especially vv. 8 and 12) and to use his or her gift with faithfulness and diligence (v. 15). Thus, Paul's words must have reverberated in the ears and mind of Timothy, foreshadowing the even more forceful charge in 2 Timothy 4:1–2: "I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction."

●  
**WORDS FROM WESLEY**

*1 Timothy 4:13*

*Give thyself to reading—Both publicly and privately. Enthusiasts, observe this! Expect no end without the means. (ENNT)*

Once again, as in the instructions regarding training in godliness, Timothy was urged to **devote** himself fully (1 Tim. 4:13) to these matters, in order that **everyone may see** his **progress** (v. 15). The issue here is not a prideful self-confidence that Timothy was making progress. Rather, it was that his life might be an **example** to those he led (v. 12). If young ministers **watch** their lives **and doctrine closely** (v. 16), remaining steadfast (“persevering,” v. 16), both they and their hearers will be saved (Phil. 2:12).

WORDS FROM WESLEY

1 Timothy 4:15

*Meditate*—The Bible makes no distinction between this and to contemplate, whatever others do. True meditation is no other than faith, hope, love, joy, melted down together, as it were, by the fire of God’s Holy Spirit: and offered up to God in secret. He that is wholly in these, will be little in worldly company, in other studies, in collecting books, medals, or butterflies: wherein many pastors drone away so considerable a part of their lives! (ENNT)

Life and doctrine are inextricably connected. Godliness starts with the truths of the faith (1 Tim. 4:6) but always leads to exemplary living (v. 12). Both are essential for the one who would be a good minister (servant) of Christ Jesus.

## **DISCUSSION**

Although he was a young man, Timothy's character and conduct were to be exemplary. Unless he had the respect of believers of all ages, false teachers would gain a foothold at Ephesus.

1. What heretical teachings did Paul identify in 1 Timothy 4:3?
2. What heretical teaching do you think is the most dangerous today? Why?
3. Why should a believer try to maintain good physical health?
4. When and how should some Christians be vegetarians?
5. Can a godly, knowledgeable minister of the Word be too young or old to serve as a pastor?
6. Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 4:10 that the living God "is the Savior of all men." Does this mean all human beings are saved? If not, why not?
7. How can a believer set an example in speech today?
8. How can a congregation safeguard the pastor's sermon preparation time?

## **PRAYER**

Lord, we pray for those who may look down on us because of our age, gender, ethnicity, or any number of reasons. Be merciful to them, and give us patience as we interact with them.