



"INSTRUCTIONS TO TIMOTHY"

1 Timothy 4:1-6:21

NIV MEMORY VERSE: 1 Timothy 6:18

Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

Outline:

- A. Being a man of God
 - 1. False teaching
 - 2. Spiritual fitness
- B. Order in the church
 - 3. Caring for the family. Widows & orphans. "Washing the feet of saints"
 - 4. Honoring church leaders
- C. Orders from headquarters
 - 5. Money & the Christian life

Without trying, we model our values. Parents, in particular, demonstrate to their children what they consider important and valuable. And experience proves that children often follow the life-styles of their parents, repeating their successes and mistakes.

Wow ... I find this to be so true in my life. I know that my values were shaped by watching my parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, teachers, pastors and youth leaders. I watched, learned, and listened so many lessons of how to navigate through life.

➔ Timothy is a prime example of one who was influenced by godly relatives. His mother Eunice and grandmother Lois were Jewish believers who helped shape his life and promote his spiritual growth. He was the first "second generation" Christian

mentioned in the New Testament, and he became Paul's protege and pastor of the church at Ephesus. As a young minister, Timothy faced all sorts of pressures, conflicts, and challenges from the church and his surrounding culture. From Rome Paul sent this very personal letter to counsel and encourage Timothy.

Early in our marriage, "Honey" and I moved from Southern California to Cleveland, Ohio. It was the first time I lived away from my parents and grandparents, and I struggled often with feeling homesick. My grandma was an avid letter writer, and I so looked forward to finding letters from her in my mailbox. Those letters in her own handwriting are still very precious to me. She shared about living in a rural area, and surviving seasonal weather. Growing up in Southern California, I never lived through snow, freezing rain, a tornado, or hail storm, but Grandma knew from growing up on a farm in the Nebraska.

Today our older son and his young family live in Texas. Instead of sharing written letters in the mail, we share with today's technology by communicating through email, text, phone calls, and FaceTime. What is the same is listening to his life and daily struggles and offering advice and guidance when appropriate. In a strange way I'm becoming my grandma.

The book of 1st Timothy holds many life lessons. Take note of Paul's relationship with this young disciple - his careful counsel and guidance. If you are young in the faith, follow the example of godly Christian leaders like Timothy, who imitated Paul's life. If you are a parent, remind yourself of the profound effect a Christian home can have on family members. If you are more "seasoned" in faith, remember that you have a role in influencing the "Timothy's" who live in your world.

Last week my small group discussed the qualifications of bishops and deacons from the first half of 1st Timothy. We agreed that these are qualities that all men (and women) should have. In some way we are all bishops and deacons, even if it's only within our own families and homes.

➔ In the second half of 1st Timothy, Paul writes about:

- Being a man of God; being able to recognize false teaching, and how to have spiritual fitness;
- Order in the church; caring for the family of widows and orphans, and honoring church leaders; and
- Having money and the Christian life.

Paul's letter to Timothy appears to have a recurring theme with regard to false teachers. False teachers were and still are a threat to the church. Jesus and the apostles repeatedly warned against them. The danger that Timothy faced in Ephesus seems to have come from certain people in the church who were following Greek philosophers who taught that the body was evil and that only the soul mattered. The

false teachers refused to believe that the God of creation was good, because his very contact with the physical world would have soiled him. Though these Greek-influenced church members honored Jesus, they could not believe he was truly human. Paul knew that their teachings, if left unchecked, would greatly distort Christian truth.

It is not enough that a teacher appears to know what he is talking about, is disciplined and moral, or says that he is speaking for God. If his words contradict the Bible, his teaching is false. Like Timothy, we must guard against any teaching that causes believers to dilute or reject any aspect of their faith. Such false teaching can be very direct or extremely subtle.

→ We can recognize false teachers by the description Paul gave in 4:1-5.

- **They are energized by Satan** - Satan is an imitator. He has his own ministers and doctrines, and seeks to deceive God's people and lead them astray. The first test of any religious doctrine is what it says about Jesus Christ.
- **They lead people astray** - Their goal is to seduce people and to get them to depart from the faith. This is the word 'apostasy,' and it is defined as "a willful turning away from the truth of the Christian faith."

This is one difference between a true church and a religious cult: A true church seeks to win converts to Jesus Christ and to build them spiritually. Conversely, a cult proselytizes, steals converts from others, and makes them servants of the leaders of the cult.

- **They are hypocrites** - "You shall know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:15-20). These false teachers preach one thing but practice another. They tell their disciples what to do, but they do not do it themselves.

One of the marks of a true servant of God is his honesty and integrity. He practices what he preaches. This does not mean he is sinlessly perfect, but that he sincerely seeks to obey the Word of God. He tries to maintain a good conscience.

Whenever we affirm with our lips something that we deny with our lives, we deaden our consciences just a little more. Jesus made it clear that it is not religious talk or even performing miracles that qualifies a person for heaven, but doing God's will in everyday life (Matt. 7:21-29). Believing and behaving always go together.

- **They deny God's Word** - The false teachers in Ephesus combined Jewish legalism with Eastern asceticism. They taught that certain foods were taboo. If you ate them, you were not spiritual. The fact that God called his own creation "good" did not interest these teachers. Their self-proclaimed authority to dictate diets gave them power over their converts.

Jesus stated that all foods are clean. A person may not be able to eat certain foods for physical reasons, but no food is to be rejected for spiritual reasons. The food we eat is sanctified when we pray and give thanks. So the Word of God and prayer turn even an ordinary meal into a spiritual service for God's glory.

➔ Then Paul sifted to an athletic illustration. Just as a Greek or Roman athlete had to refuse certain things, eat the right food, and do the right exercises, so the Christian should practice "spiritual exercise." If a Christian puts as much energy and discipline into his spiritual life as an athlete does into his game, the Christian grows faster and accomplishes much more for God.



As an athlete must control his body and obey the rules, so a Christian must make his body his servant and not his master. I am reminded that there are spiritual exercises that I should be doing (Heb. 5:14). Prayer, meditation, self-examination, fellowship, service, sacrifice, submission to the will of others, and witnessing - all of these can assist me, through the Spirit, to become a more godly person.

Spiritual exercise is not easy. We must "labor and suffer reproach." "For this we labor and strive." The word translated for "strive" is an athletic word from which comes the English word 'agonize.' It is the picture of an athlete straining and giving his best to win or cross the finish line. A Christian who wants to excel must really work at it, but to the grace of God and to the glory of God.

➔ Exercising ourselves in godly living is not only beneficial for us, it is beneficial for others. It enables us to be good examples, so that we encourage others. Paul named several areas of life in which you and I should be examples.

- **In word** - Our speech should always be honest and loving, "speaking the truth in love."
- **In conduct** - Our lives are to be controlled by the Word of God. We must not be like the hypocrites Paul described to Titus, professing that they know God, but in works they deny him.
- **In love or charity** - This points to the motivation of our lives. We do not obey God to be applauded by men, rather because we love God and his people.
- **In spirit** - It describes the inner enthusiasm and excitement of a child of God.
- **In faith** - We must trust God and be faithful to Him. Faith and love often go together. Faith always leads to faithfulness.
- **In purity** - This is important as we live in this present evil world. Ephesus was a center for sexual impurity, and the young man Timothy was faced with temptations. He must have a pure and honest relationship to the women in the church and keep

himself pure in mind, heart, and body. ... (On a personal note - this is a topic I touch on with my sons, even now.)

Godly living not only helps us and other believers, it also has its influence on the lost. Paul reminded Timothy that Jesus Christ is the Savior, and it is the believer's task to share that good news with the lost. In effect he wrote,

"We Christians have fixed our hope in the living God, but the lost have no hope and do not know the living God. All that many of them know are the dead idols that can never save them." It is our role as believers to show them hope. Live so others can see Christ in you.

Paul also instructed Timothy how to minister to specific groups in his church. The early church faced a problem also faced in today's church, someone in the congregation was feeling neglected. Paul admonished Timothy to minister to the various kinds of people in the church including elders, widows, and slaves.

Because there were no pensions, no social security, no life insurance, and few honorable jobs for women during New Testament times, widows and the elderly were usually unable to support themselves. The responsibility for caring for the helpless naturally falls first on their families, the people whose lives are most closely linked with theirs. Paul stresses the importance of families caring for the needs of widows, and not leaving it for the church - so the church can care for those widows who have no families. A widow who had no children or other family members to support her was doomed to poverty. Early on, the church took care of its widows, who in turn gave valuable service to the church.

The church as a body should be supportive of those who have no families, the elderly, young, disabled, ill or poverty stricken with their emotional and spiritual needs. Often families who care for their own needy members carry heavy burdens. They may need funds, a listening ear, a helping hand, or a word of encouragement. Often those who are helped often turn around and help others, turning the church into a more caring community.

Paul wanted Christian families to be as self-supporting as possible. He insisted that children and grandchildren take care of the widows in their families. He suggested that younger widows remarry and start new families, and he ordered the church to not support lazy members who refused to work. However, when necessary, the believers pooled their resources and gave generously to disaster-ridden churches. They took care of a large number of widows.

The church has always had limited resources, and it has always had to balance financial responsibility with generosity. It only makes sense for members to work as hard as they are able and to be as independent as possible, so they can adequately care for themselves and for less fortunate members. When church members are both responsible and generous, needs will be met.

Paul's instruction to Timothy in this lesson could be talking directly about this group. I suspect there are many widows and widowers in this room. So let's jump into what Paul considers a godly widow (or widower).

➔ The church could not care for all the widows in the city, but it should care for believers who are a part of the fellowship.

- **A believer with a faithful testimony** - A widow the church helps should not be a self-indulgent person, seeking pleasure, but a godly woman who hopes in God and has a ministry of intercession and prayer.
- **At least sixty years old** - In New Testament times a woman of this age was not likely to get remarried, though sixty is not considered that "old" today. Thank you very much!
- **A good marriage record** - The implication is that the widow was not a divorced woman. Faithfulness to one's marriage vows is very important in the eyes of God.
- **A witness of good works** - If a person is faithfully serving God, the light will shine and others will see it and glorify God. Hospitality is another factor, for this was an important ministry in those days when travel was dangerous and safe places to sleep were scarce. Relieving the afflicted could cover many kinds of ministry to the needy: feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, encouraging the sorrowing, etc.

Godly widows were, and should be, cared for by the church, but they also helped to care for the church. This created reciprocating relationships.

The younger widows should technically be under 60 years old, but Paul likely had much younger women in mind. Paul admonished Timothy against enrolling the younger widows and putting them under the care of the church. Paul's point is that younger widows, if cared for by the church, would have time on their hands and get involved in sinful activities.

➔ "To manage their homes" (vs. 5:14), means to "rule the house." A wife should manage the affairs of the household, and her husband should trust her to do so. The result of all this is a good testimony that silences the accusers. Satan, the adversary, is always alert to an opportunity to invade and destroy a Christian home. How Christian wives and mothers manage their homes can be a testimony to those outside the church. In his letter to Timothy, Paul summarized the principle of each family caring for the needs of its own members.

How does this principle apply to Christians today? Certainly we must honor our parents and grandparents, and seek to provide for them if they have needs. Not every family is able to take in another member, and not every widow wants to live with her children. Where there is sickness or handicap, professional care is necessary, and perhaps cannot be given in a home. The point is ... Each family must decide what God's will is in this

matter, and no decision is easy. The important thing is that believers show love and concern and do all they can to help each other.

Apparently Timothy was having some problems with the elders of the church at Ephesus. He was a relatively young man and still had much to learn. Ephesus was not an easy place to minister. Paul counseled Timothy in his relationship to the elders in:

- Paying the elders,
- Disciplining the elders, and
- Selecting and ordaining the elders.

Church leaders are not exempt from sin, faults, and mistakes. But they are often criticized for the wrong reasons - minor imperfections, failure to meet someone's expectations, and personality clashes. Paul said that accusations should not even be heard unless two or three witnesses confirm them. Sometimes church leaders should be confronted about their behavior, and sometimes they should be rebuked. But all rebuking must be done fairly and lovingly, and for the purpose of restoration.

As leaders, we must be constantly on guard against favoritism, against giving preferential treatment to some and ignoring others. We live in a society that plays favorites. It's easy to give special treatment to those who are gifted, intelligent, right, or beautiful without realizing what we are doing. For yourself, make sure you honor people for who they are in Christ, and not for who they are in the world.

In Paul's culture there was a great social and legal gulf separating masters and slaves. But as Christians, masters and slaves became spiritual equals, brothers and sisters in Christ (Gal. 3:28). Paul did not speak against the institution of slavery, but he gave guidelines for Christian slaves and Christian masters. His counsel for the master/slave relationship can be applied to the employer/employee relationship today. Employees should work hard, showing respect for their employers. In turn, employers should be fair. Our work should reflect our faithfulness to and love for Christ.

Paul told Timothy to stay away from those who just wanted to make money from preaching, and from those who strayed from the sound teachings of the gospel into quarrels that caused strife in the church. A person's understanding of the finer points of theology should not become the basis for lording it over others or for making money. Stay away from people who just want to argue.

➔ "But godliness with contentment is great gain." (1 Timothy 6:6)

This statement is the key to spiritual growth and personal fulfillment. We should honor God and center our desires on him, and we should be content with what God is doing in our lives.

Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, most people still believe that money brings happiness. Rich people craving greater riches can be caught in an endless cycle that only ends in ruin and destruction. ➔ How can you keep away from the love of money?

1. Realize that one day riches will all be gone (6:7, 17)
2. Be content with what you have (6:8)
3. Monitor what you are willing to do to get more money (6:9, 10)
4. Love people more than money (6:11)
5. Love God's work more than money (6:11)
6. Freely share what you have with others (6:18)

➔ While caring for the needs of his people, Timothy needed to care for himself as well. "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim. 4:16). Paul gave four admonitions to Timothy that, if obeyed, would assure him success in his ministry.

- Flee,
- Follow,
- Fight, and
- Be faithful.

The word 'flee' that Paul used here did not refer to literal running, but to Timothy separating himself from the sins of the false teachers. There are times when a servant of God should take a stand against false doctrine and godless practices, and separate himself from them.

➔ Paul directs Timothy to follow or pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.

- Righteousness means "personal integrity".
- Godliness means "practical piety." The first has to do with character, the second with conduct.
- Faith might better be translated as faithfulness.
- Love is the agape love that sacrifices for the sake of others. It seeks to give and not to gain.
- Patience carries the idea of endurance, sticking to it when the going gets tough.
- Gentleness describes courageous endurance with meekness, and meekness is power under control.

➔ "Fighting the good fight of faith" (vs. 6:12) describes a person straining and giving his best to win the prize or win the battle. This fight is not between believers, it is between a person of God and the enemy around him. He is fighting to defend the faith, that the body of truth deposited with the church. What encourages us in the battle, knowing that we have eternal life.

➔ "Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care." (Vs. 6:20) God had committed the truth to Paul, and Paul had committed it to Timothy. It was Timothy's responsibility to guard the deposit and then pass it along to others who would, in turn, continue to pass it on. This is God's way of protecting the truth and spreading it around the world. We are stewards of the doctrines of faith, and God expects us to be faithful in sharing His good news.

The book of 1st Timothy provides guiding principles for local churches, including rules for public worship and qualifications for elders, pastors, deacons, and special church workers (or widows). Paul tells the church leaders to correct incorrect doctrine and to deal lovingly and fairly with all people in the church.

➔ The church is not organized simply for the sake of the organization, but so Christ can be honored and glorified. While studying these guidelines, don't lose sight of what is most important in the life of the church -

- Knowing God,
- Working together in loving harmony, and
- Taking God's Good News to the world.