The reason for Jesus’ coming to earth was to save sinners. In Paul’s first letter to Timothy, he acknowledged that among sinners he was “worst” (1 Timothy 1:15). Paul’s point was this: if Jesus would and could save someone like him, given who he was and what he had done, then Jesus is able to save anyone.

God’s grace abounds to all people who acknowledge their sin and place their faith in Jesus. The Bible tells us that God “wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). He has made a way possible for us to be forgiven of all our sin—it is through Jesus. “For there is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, a testimony at the proper time” (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). He is waiting for you now.

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin.

- **By faith receive** Jesus Christ as God’s Son and accept Jesus’ gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.

- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: “Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.”

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.
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*Evangelistic Emphasis
WRITERS

ARGILE SMITH wrote the Key Words and Dig Deeper elements for this quarter. He serves as pastor of Parkway Baptist Church in Biloxi, Mississippi. A graduate of William Carey University (BA) and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (MDiv, PhD), he has also served as a theological educator and Baptist college administrator. He and his wife, Connie, have three grown sons, three remarkable daughters-in-law, and four fairly perfect grandchildren.

KIMA JUDE wrote the Discussion Plans and Object Lessons. She is a writer and pastor’s wife living in Dayton, Ohio. Born and raised in southern West Virginia, Kima is a graduate of Marshall University. Kima and her husband, Barry, helped plant New Day Church in 2009. Barry serves as lead pastor, and Kima serves as a leader in children’s ministry and helps manage church communications.
A WORD FROM THE GENERAL EDITOR

You will be blessed, encouraged, and challenged as you study 1,2 Timothy and Titus. Paul, in his Pastoral Epistles, speaks from seemingly every possible angle about the Christian life—who we are in Christ, how we are to live our new life in Christ, and even the qualities and characteristics of effective church leaders.

As a pastor of forty-two years, it has been my passion to lead the churches I have served to have a true love for the Bible. I believe the Bible is not just a truth to learn but the truth to obey. I also believe that deep within the heart of every true believer is a deep desire to know God better and to live the life of a difference maker.

As you engage in this study, you will quickly realize that the Christian life is a life of blessing but comes with its share of challenges. Whether the challenge is dealing with difficult people, false doctrinal teaching, or how to instruct a disciple, these three epistles will leave no rock unturned.

My deep love for Explore the Bible comes from a mutual love for expositional teaching. I love it when a writer simply lifts the truth from the text and gives glorious insight, instruction, and inspiration from the passage.

The studies in this book will give a clear understanding of each Scripture passage under consideration. They will tackle the tough passages with clarity and provide helpful answers that will lead you to have a better grasp of truth. Invite others to join you in your Bible study group for an enlightening journey with the apostle Paul.

Johnny Hunt

Johnny Hunt, longtime senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Georgia, and past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, recently joined the North American Mission Board as senior vice president of evangelism and leadership.
TWO WAYS TO USE QUICKSOURCE

AS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE EXPLORE THE BIBLE LEADER GUIDE

1. After completing your study using the commentary provided in the Explore the Bible Leader Guide, consult the Exploring Key Words section and the Talking Points page for additional insight or as a review.

2. After creating your initial plans for guiding the group time using the suggestions included in the Leader Guide, supplement and refine your plan using the ideas found in QuickSource. You will also want to consult the Explore the Bible blog (LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible) or Explore the Bible Ministry Grid page (MinistryGrid.com/ExploreTheBible) for additional ideas.

AS YOUR PRIMARY RESOURCE FOR PREPARING TO LEAD A SMALL BIBLE STUDY GROUP

1. Read and study the core passage.

   Use Exploring Key Words on the first page of the session content to gain an understanding of the passage. Consult a study Bible and a Bible commentary like the Explore the Bible Adult Commentary (available at LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible in both print and digital formats) to gain additional insight into the passage.

2. Review the outline provided on the Talking Points page (page 2 of each session).

   Record ideas and insights gleaned from your personal study time. Note: You may want to make a photocopy of the Talking Points page so you can use QuickSource again in the future.

3. Review the questions on the Discussion Plan page (page 3 of each session).

   Identify the questions you believe would work best with the group you are leading. Reword the selected questions to reflect your personality and the personality of the group. Record the reworded questions on the Talking Points page (or the photocopy you made of the page) next to the point related to the question. Remember to arrange the questions so that you are leading the group to a conclusion or action.
4. Consider ways of using the Object Lesson idea (page 4 of each session).
   Brainstorm other ideas sparked by the object lesson suggestion.

5. Read the Dig Deeper feature (page 4 of each session).
   Add insights gained from this page to the Talking Points page.

6. Use the Personal Study Guide (PSG).
   Scan a copy of the *Personal Study Guide* (PSG), looking for additional questions and the Bible skill feature. Consider ways of incorporating the Bible skill into the session, recording your ideas on the Talking Points page. Record additional questions from the PSG on the Talking Points page as well.

7. Review and refine.
   Consult the Explore the Bible blog (LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible) or Explore the Bible Ministry Grid (MinistryGrid.com/ExploreTheBible) for additional ideas.

8. Arrive early.
   The group time starts when the first person arrives. Make sure you are that person so you can set the tone and direction for the group Bible study time.

9. Lead the group in a time of Bible study.
   Carry the Talking Points page into the class, using this page as your guide for leading the group.
INTRODUCTION TO 1,2 TIMOTHY; TITUS

BACKGROUND

Young preachers share a special relationship with the mentors God places into their lives. I have been a “preacher boy” to two senior pastors who greatly influenced me. As a pastor and seminary professor, I’ve been blessed to mentor several men when they began their ministries. Years later, they still call me seeking guidance about various aspects of ministry. Such was the relationship between the apostle Paul with Timothy and Titus. Paul used the phrase “son in the faith” in his letters to each of them (1 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4).

As Paul traveled on his missionary journeys, Timothy and Titus helped him in several locations. Timothy served in Corinth (1 Cor. 4:17) and Macedonia (Acts 19:22) before staying in Ephesus at Paul’s instruction. Titus also traveled with Paul (Gal. 2:1; 2 Cor. 8:23) before being told to remain on the island of Crete. Timothy and Titus helped start several churches and worked with the congregations as they selected pastoral leaders and deacons. In First Timothy and Titus, Paul gave specific instructions about the qualifications for pastors and deacons, as well as guidance regarding various situations in the churches. Consequently, these three short letters are known as the pastoral epistles.

WRITER

All three letters are attributed to the apostle Paul, not only by internal evidence in the salutations but also according to references by the early church fathers. In First Timothy, Paul specifically told Timothy to remain in Ephesus while the apostle traveled to Macedonia. Paul wrote the second letter to Timothy from his final imprisonment in Rome, giving his son in the faith very personal instructions and encouragement.

Paul had been with Titus in Crete and left him there to minister to the churches. Luke wrote about Paul’s hazardous journey to Rome by way of Crete while in custody of a Roman centurion (Acts 27). However, this occasion would not have permitted time for Paul to work with believers there, much less to leave Titus in charge of the church. Most likely, Paul and Titus visited Crete following Paul’s release from his first imprisonment.

RECIPIENTS

Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles was personified in his relationships with Timothy and Titus. Timothy’s father was Greek (Gentile), while his mother was Jewish (Acts 16:1). Because the Jews knew Timothy’s father was Greek, Paul circumcised him. Although Paul referred to Timothy as his “son in the faith,” it is possible Paul did not lead Timothy to Christ. Luke notes they met this young disciple when Paul visited Lystra (Acts 16:1). However, some scholars believe Paul was instrumental in Timothy’s conversion during a previous visit to this area.
Paul also called Titus his “my true son in our common faith” (Titus 1:4). In addition, Titus became an important helper in Paul’s ministry, joining him on his trip to Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1). Paul referred to Titus as his “partner and coworker” in the ministry to the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 8:23). While Paul circumcised Timothy because he was half Jewish, Titus was not circumcised because he was Greek (Gal. 2:3).

**DATE**

First Timothy and Titus share many similarities, causing some commentators to believe they were written about the same time. Some commentators claim Paul wrote 1 Timothy while he was in Macedonia, possibly in the vicinity of Philippi. However, in 1 Timothy 1:3 Paul used the phrase “when I went to Macedonia,” not “when I came to Macedonia.” The latter would have been more likely if he were writing from Macedonia. Therefore, the letter was written sometime after he left Macedonia. This theory is strengthened by Paul’s anticipation of rejoining Timothy in Ephesus (1 Tim. 4:13).

Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy while imprisoned in Rome. This occasion would have been the second time Paul had been imprisoned as Paul anticipated the end of his life (2 Tim. 4:6), placing this letter sometime prior to the death of Nero in 68 AD.

In between the two letters to Timothy, Paul wrote to Titus with instructions about the church in Crete. Since Paul mentions his intention to spend the winter at Nicopolis (Titus 3:12), this letter and First Timothy likely were written between 63 and 66 AD, possibly between Paul’s two imprisonments in Rome.

**PURPOSE**

We are familiar with First Timothy and Titus because of Paul’s instructions related to the qualifications of pastors and deacons. However, both letters primarily deal with correcting false doctrine that threatened the churches in Ephesus and Crete. Paul referred to the ongoing battle with heresies as “warfare,” and named opponents who resisted the faith (1 Tim. 1:18-20; 2 Tim. 1:15). Paul also advised his young preachers how they and the local believers should behave as positive examples of the faith (1 Tim. 3:15; Titus 2:15).

Second Timothy resounds with a more personal tone. Paul mentioned Timothy’s family and the legacy of faith the young preacher perpetuated. He was aware of Timothy’s tears, as both knew the end of Paul’s life was near. While Paul’s previous epistle focused more on pastoral and ecclesiastical issues, this letter concentrated more specifically on Timothy, including numerous admonitions regarding Timothy’s life, faith, and ministry. Too, Paul’s references to his personal struggles portray a man sharing deeply felt emotions with his son in the faith.
OUTLINES OF 1,2 TIMOTHY; TITUS

1 Timothy

I. Greeting (1:1-2)
II. Charge to Timothy (1:3-20)
III. Proper Worship (2:1-15)
IV. Proper Church Leaders (3:1-13)
V. Proper Focus (3:14–4:16)
VI. Respecting Others (5:1–6:2)
VII. Conclusions (6:3-21)

2 Timothy

I. Greeting (1:1-7)
II. Always Faithful (1:8-18)
III. Strong in Grace (2:1-13)
IV. An Approved Worker (2:14-26)
V. Facing Persecution (3:1–4:8)
VI. Final Instructions (4:9-22)

Titus

I. Greeting (1:1-4)
II. Titus’s Ministry in Crete (1:5-16)
III. Sound Teaching (2:1-15)
IV. Importance of Good Works (3:1-11)
V. Conclusion (3:12-15)
SESSION 1
ENTRUSTED

1 TIMOTHY 1:3-17

As I urged you when I went to Macedonia, remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach false doctrine or to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies. These promote empty speculations rather than God’s plan, which operates by faith. Now the goal of our instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. Some have departed from these and turned aside to fruitless discussion. They want to be teachers of the law, although they don’t understand what they are saying or what they are insisting on. But we know that the law is good, provided one uses it legitimately. We know that the law is not meant for a righteous person, but for the lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinful, for the unholy and irreverent, for those who kill their fathers and mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral and homosexuals, for slave traders, liars, perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which was entrusted to me. I give thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me, because he considered me faithful, appointing me to the ministry— even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man. But I received mercy because I acted out of ignorance in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A Some of the teachers in the church had strayed from the instruction that centered on Christ.
B These teachers had become fascinated with fairy-tale-like stories and “long lists of ancestors” (GNT).
C The work God gave them to advance His kingdom on earth (Matt. 6:10).
D From devoting themselves to God’s Word, they would grow stronger in His love for them, prompting them to love Him and each other (Matt. 22:36-38).
E “Empty talk” (CEV); “vain jangling” (KJV)
F Like the Pharisees, teachers of the law confronted Jesus—an expert who instructed people in the law of Moses—in His ministry (Luke 5:17; Acts 5:34).
G “The right way” (CEV); “used as it should be” (GNT)
H All people who have been made right with God through Jesus Christ. By repenting and placing their faith in Christ, He made them righteous.
I God’s gift of salvation through Christ alone must remain the bedrock of their faith and instruction.
J Paul gave the Lord all the credit for appointing him as “trustworthy” (NLT) to serve Him.
K “I did not yet have faith and so did not know what I was doing” (GNT).
L Instead of being rightly punished, God gave Paul what he never deserved—new life in Christ.
M “Public Sinner Number One” (The Message)

Continued on next page
extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

TALKING POINTS

1. ACCOUNTABLE (1 Tim. 1:3-7)
   - Paul directed Timothy to teach the truth faithfully and to hold other teachers in the church accountable for teaching the pure gospel.
   - Paul emphasized the goal of gospel teaching is genuine love arising out of godly motives.

2. IN LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL (1 Tim. 1:8-11)
   - Paul reminded Timothy that the law pointed to the need for a Savior.
   - Jesus did what the law could not.

3. IN RESPONSE TO HIS GRACE (1 Tim. 1:12-17)
   - Paul reflected on the difference the gospel had made in his life, being reminded of his own sin and God’s grace expressed to him.
   - All are sinners, but God gives mercy to those who believe.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

As recipients of God’s grace, believers are entrusted with the truth of the gospel message.
- Teachers are accountable to the church and God.
- Salvation is found only through faith in Jesus.
- Believers are an exhibit of God’s grace and mercy for all to see.

Paul’s testimony shed light on God’s extreme longsuffering with Paul before he became a Christian.
FOCUS ATTENTION
What would being someone’s legal guardian entail?
How does that compare to a Christian’s responsibility for the gospel?
- Becoming a guardian is a sacred trust and commitment to accept
  and assume responsibility for another person, usually a minor or
  incapacitated adult.
- God has entrusted the gospel to us, a responsibility that we
  accept by taking actions to safeguard its message.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE
1 TIMOTHY 1:3-7
How are the threats to the gospel message that Paul
identified still risks today?
- The desire to pollute the gospel by subtracting from it,
  adding to it, or inventing something entirely new appeals to
  everyone’s sinful natures.
- Getting sidetracked with intriguing ideas and speculative
  questions leads nowhere.
- Chasing different doctrines diminishes our wholehearted faith in
  the gospel message.

How do godly goals for teaching preserve the gospel’s
purity?
- God doesn’t expect us to become mindless or unthinking gospel
  advocates, but faith will eventually overcome doubts.
- With motives of love, we get to the heart of God’s message, not
  the things that distract us from it.
- Because we care for others, our message is urgent and
  persuasive, one we must impress on those we disciple. We’re
  not just teaching doctrine; we’re instilling love, a pure heart, a
  sincere conscience, and strong faith.

Why is it important that we call out those who choose
to teach a different doctrine?
- Deviating from the message doesn’t benefit teachers or learners.
- Sound teaching depends on trusting in the complete authority
  of the Scriptures.
- Kindly and respectfully pointing out inconsistencies,
  misstatements, and errors is part of being obedient to speak
  the truth in love.

1 TIMOTHY 1:8-11
In what ways have you seen the law used for good?
- Teaching others the law warns them away from the dangers
  of sinful behavior. Knowing the boundaries and why they exist
  empowers us to resist sin.

What does illegitimate use of the law look like?
- The law may be used as a stumbling block when we use it to
  condemn others or fail to contextualize it.
- No person can live up to the law but Jesus, who offers Himself
to us by faith as the sacrificial fulfillment of the law—the One
  who will take the punishment for our sins.

When you read the extensive list of people for whom
the law was written, what provides comfort?
- The righteous person keeps the law, which the Bible defines as
  not a burden (1 John 5:3).
- On the other hand, the broad, sweeping category of the “sinful”
  identifies every person as a lawbreaker.
- Tucked among the extraordinary sinners, such as murderers and
  kidnappers, are the petty, the irreverent, and the liars, which
  points back to the inclusive nature of a law that—outside of
  Christ—judges each of us as lawbreakers.

1 TIMOTHY 1:12-17
Why is a personal testimony such a rich and powerful
tool for communicating the truths of the gospel?
- Being as brutally transparent as Paul was about his sinfulness
  and life before Christ communicates our need for a Savior.
- In describing himself as the worst of sinners, Paul proclaimed
  hope for every other sinner out there.
- Personal testimonies are always unique to individuals, but God
  extends the same mercy and grace that He gave to Paul to
  everyone who believes.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE
Because God has called us to act as guardians of the
gospel, what can we do to live out that responsibility?
- In order to know the truth, we must be faithful students
  of the Word.
- Holding others accountable for what they teach is part of our
  responsibility as Christians.
- Sharing a personal testimony with others can be a wonderful
  tool for helping someone else understand the gospel.

Personal Challenge: Have you taken the time to write your
testimony or rehearsed it verbally? Recall the person you were
before Jesus saved you. Would you, like Paul, describe yourself as
the worst of sinners? If grace is a life-changer, what can you say is
different for you? Whether it’s a change in thought patterns, sinful
behaviors, or radical lifestyle adjustments, articulating Christ’s
impact communicates the gospel.
MISSPELLED AND UNGRAMMATICAL COPY AND RED INK PENS

Before the session, copy a few paragraphs from a news article or prepare some copy of your own to use in an exercise with the group. Change the wording to include grammar, spelling, and punctuation mistakes. Make copies of the page for each member of the group and distribute, along with red ink pens. Explain to the group that you want them to become proofreaders.

Say: Professional proofreaders consider themselves guardians of the language. In other words, factual reporting aside, they try to ensure that whatever they publish is immaculate in content and without spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors. Challenge the group to find, circle, and correct the errors in a friendly competition to determine who is the best guardian of the language.

Say: In the same way that proofreaders are charged with being guardians of the language, Christians are charged with being guardians of the gospel. Read 1 Timothy 1:3-11. Emphasize: It’s up to us to keep the gospel message pure, clear, and on point. There’s no place in the gospel for communicating a doctrine with errors, uncertainty, or confusion, and there’s no excuse for allowing others to do it either. When it comes to teaching, the standard is high and holy because it’s about the very souls of the ones who receive it.

Read 1 Timothy 1:12-17. Point out that Paul shared the gospel by telling the difference Jesus made in his life. Close by praying that the group would protect the truth of the gospel and share its impact on them.

GOD’S EXAMPLE OF LOVE

Have you noticed how the theme of love runs throughout 1 Timothy 1:3-17? Paul brings it to our attention early in the passage when he clarifies the goal of our instruction: “love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith” (v. 5).

We experience God’s love for us in ways that constantly refresh us as we serve Him. His love makes a difference in us. It changes our focus and enables us to enjoy the honor He has given us to be His children. But it doesn’t stop there. Once it makes a difference in us, God’s love makes a difference through us. His love for us gives way to our love for others.

Therefore, teaching God’s Word with the goal of love in mind doesn’t require us to have refined intellectual capabilities. Neither do we have to possess unique communication skills. Instead, teaching with the goal of love requires that we approach our work with “a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith” (1 Tim. 1:5).

As Paul focused our attention on the goal of love in our instruction, he brought up his personal walk with the Lord. He testified about his own experience with God’s love for him. He considered himself to be the “worst” sinner ever born (v. 15). Yet God saved him and gave him the privilege of sharing the gospel of Christ with everyone everywhere. Love fostered God’s eagerness to pour out His remarkable mercy and grace on Paul. As a result, God’s love transformed Paul, nourishing his faith so he could share the good news of Christ.

Paul drew a sharp contrast between people who had received Christ and others who had rejected Him. Notice that Paul developed a list that contained the kinds of people who had violated God’s law (vv. 9-11). All of them had one trait in common: They had turned their backs on God with their sinful behavior. No matter how much they tried to justify what they had done, God’s law wouldn’t allow them to ignore or dilute the hard truth. His law deemed their actions as sins for which they would be punished. However, God’s love for them would fuel His mercy and grace if they turned to Him. Just like Paul, they could be made new in Him. That’s how God’s love worked then, and His love still works in Christ the same way today.
SESSION 2
ON MISSION

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-15

1 First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, 2 for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

3 This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, a testimony at the proper time.

7 For this I was appointed a herald, an apostle (I am telling the truth; I am not lying), and a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

8 Therefore, I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument.

9 Also, the women are to dress themselves in modest clothing, with decency and good sense, not with elaborate hairstyles, gold, pearls, or expensive apparel,

10 but with good works, as is proper for women who profess to worship God. 11 A woman is to learn quietly with full submission.

12 I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; instead, 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 transgressed. 15 But she will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with good sense.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A "Pray every way you know how" (The Message). Emphasizing the necessity of prayer remained an urgent matter for Paul (see 1:3).

B Paul wanted Christians to be respected by people in power and for church leaders to behave in a manner worthy of respect (1 Tim. 2:2; 3:4,8,11).

C "This [kind of praying]" (AMP) makes a difference.

D God wants people to be born again (John 3:16) and to grow in their understanding of Jesus Christ.

E "One who brings God and human beings together" (GNT)

F "Jesus, who offered himself in exchange for everyone held captive by sin, to set them all free" (The Message)

G Those "dedicated to God" (GNT) show a gesture of complete surrender and devotion to Him.

H Godly actions; whatever they did would call attention to or detract from God living in them.

I The term isn’t meant to belittle women but suggests the need for “humility” (GNT).

J Paul used Adam and Eve to explain his approach to orderly behavior for Christians who gather together to worship and serve Him (1 Cor. 11:7-9).

K Crossed the line drawn by God’s clear instruction

L Men and woman alike are saved by giving their lives to Jesus. However, a Christian woman embraces her unique role in bringing children into the world and strives to grow toward spiritual maturity.

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1. THROUGH PRAYER (1 Tim. 2:1-7)
- Paul called on Timothy to lead the church to pray for the salvation of all people.
- This type of prayer focus is borne out of God’s desire for all people to be saved through faith in Jesus.
- Emphasize that salvation comes only through faith in Jesus.
- Remind believers to pray for those in authority for the benefit of all those who seek a quiet and godly life.

2. LED BY GODLY MEN (1 Tim. 2:8)
- Paul called on male believers to set the example through prayer with love and unity.
- Refrain from making the posture of prayer the emphasis, focusing on the quality demanded for the lifted hands—holiness.

3. SUPPORTED BY GODLY WOMEN (1 Tim. 2:9-15)
- Paul gave directions to women, encouraging them to be mindful of their dress and actions especially when gathered for worship.
- Affirm that men and women are equally created in the image of God, but made differently and with different roles.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS
Believers are to be mindful of how they represent God in this world.
- Believers are to pray with a focus on the lost.
- Godly men are to set the example when it comes to praying for others.
- Godly women are mindful of how their dress and actions impact the witness of the church.
FOCUS ATTENTION

What distinguishes a Christian from an unbeliever in the world?

• A faith mind-set: Christians see the world through a spiritual prism that colors our thoughts and influences our ways.
• Behaviors: Believers engage in a curious and peculiar mix of spiritual and religious rites. They go to church, worship, pray, tithe, and fast.
• Outward appearance: Our choices, for example, in clothing or entertainment often signify that we’re different.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-7

What kinds of prayers do you think the world most wants? What would God want for mankind?

• Prayer is universally recognized as the language that captures God’s ear.
• As Christians, our prayers should seek to benefit and bless others. Despite the seeming rejection by popular culture, prayer represents a direct way to provide deep support to a broad group of people with a myriad of needs.
• Praying on behalf of others with every manner of prayer shows them we view God as broadly accessible, deeply caring, and intimately involved in every detail of our lives.

How does praying for our leaders change our view of them?

• By praying specifically for people in positions of authority, we release God’s power to influence the influencers and usher in peace and stability for all.
• Praying for those in leadership deepens our appreciation for the responsibilities they carry; we better empathize with those we attempt to understand.
• By calling on the authority of the Lord with humility, we wield real, personal influence over those in positions of power.

Why is praying for others so strategic for God’s kingdom?

• Just as God breathed life into humans and then planned a way to salvage those broken lives, breathing prayers for others offers them a lifeline to salvation.
• While the only way to attain salvation is through faith in Jesus, our prayers, uttered in His name, supernaturally guide others to Him.

1 TIMOTHY 2:8

What qualities of leadership does God expect faithful men to model?

• Paul directly addressed men and their leadership roles in the faith.
• God needs male prayer warriors, but initiative in prayer means more than being ready and willing to offer up eloquent words.
• God wants all men who confess faith in Jesus to display a godly temperament of love and unity.

• The correct posture for prayer is much less about an outward display of submission than a humble heart that seeks to become increasingly Christlike and manifests that desire through the pursuit of holiness.

1 TIMOTHY 2:9-15

What does God’s call for women to represent Him in the world look like?

• By nature of their God-given sex and gender, women who follow God have unique responsibilities for dress and demeanor as well as distinctive, powerful privileges, such as childbearing and influencing other women and children.
• Be sensitive to women who may be unable to have children or who may be called to singleness.
• Demonstrating a life-changing relationship with God requires that women practice good works as a lifestyle.

How do men and women represent God differently?

• Although men and women are created equally in the image of God, they have been assigned to different roles.
• Paul identified male leadership as important to the church, but women maintain vital roles in reaching people for the gospel as well.
• Understanding one’s respective roles by trusting God’s directives means we represent God well to a culture that needs clarity about who God is and how He loves.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

How would adopting a missionary mind-set enhance your ability to represent Christ?

• Missionaries live with intentionality. They maintain an acute awareness that they represent Christ to a culture that may not yet know Him but still pays attention.
• Taking to heart God’s call to pray for others offers them God’s care and love.
• Men who adopt the holiness required for earnest prayer lead others to Christ through their examples.
• Women who willingly clothe themselves with faith, good works, and humility lead others to Christ by their own examples.

• Personal Challenge: Grade yourself on your ability to represent Christ. Are you praying for others as you should? Have you accepted the role God assigned to you for representing God and leading others to Jesus? To what degree are you a reflection of Christ?

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CUTOUT LETTERS AND PINS

Prepare for the object lesson by printing and cutting out the letters J and W on card stock, making sure to have one letter and one safety pin for each group member. Use a large font size so the letters are easily seen across a room.

Hold up one of the J letters, and ask if they know what it stands for (Jesus Christ). Invite half the group to pin on the letters for Jesus. Explain that the letter W represents the world, and invite the second half to wear the W letters. Say: Those of you who are on God's team are now visible representatives of Christ. Those of you who represent the world are the watchers. Whether God's team realizes it or not, the world is watching to see how they perform. Instruct the “watching world” to observe the members of the group representing Christ.

Encourage the group to discuss what would be fitting behaviors for a representative of Christ during the session (positive actions like smiling, praying aloud, and verbal encouragement). Discuss potential negatives (being unfriendly, complaining, yawning, arguing, etc.). Ask: What actions would make you have trouble seeing a J person as someone who takes faith seriously?

DIG DEEPER

A CALL TO PRAYER

Jesus told believers that we are “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:13-14). Being salt and light can be difficult and at times dangerous. Yet Jesus called us to embrace His command to live as citizens of the kingdom of God in a world that’s hostile to Him. Believers today face growing opposition as we try to honor Him with our lives. The longer we serve Him, the more we appreciate Peter’s description of Christians as resident aliens (“exiles,” 1 Pet. 1:1). Indeed, we’re God’s people who have been placed in the world to extend the reach of His kingdom, but this world isn’t our home.

While we may find ourselves experiencing a measure of discomfort in the world in which we serve the Lord, our struggle can’t begin to match the difficulties faced by first-century Christians. They lived in a day when a powerful Roman emperor ruled over them with an iron hand. Any allegiance to anyone other than the emperor would be put down with brute force. Accordingly, when Christians expressed their devotion to the Lord, they ran the risk of being persecuted by any number of pagan people in power at the time.

How did Paul direct Timothy to address the problem in Ephesus? He didn’t direct Timothy to encourage Christians to run for cover or to take up arms against their pagan rulers. Instead, he urged them to pray. He directed them to petition God for the very individuals who had the power to harm them: “I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone” (1 Tim. 2:1). Paul’s approach may appear to us to be quite extreme, but it turns out to be the best way. We may be persecuted for following Christ, but our safety and security can’t be our main goal. What matters most to growing believers is the good news of Christ. Wise Christians eagerly want the gift of salvation through Christ to be taken seriously. For that reason, we pray for the powerful leaders in our land. With grateful hearts, we pray for them in the hope that they will honor Christ too. We ask Him to shine the light of the gospel through us. Even when we feel the pain of a lost world’s hostility toward God, we keep on praying, and we don’t give up until He comes for us.
SESSION 3
SETTING THE EXAMPLE

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

1 This saying is trustworthy: “If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work.” 2 An overseer, therefore, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not an excessive drinker, not a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome, not greedy. 3 He must manage his own household competently and have his children under control with all dignity. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of God’s church?) 4 He must not be a new convert, or he might become conceited and incur the same condemnation as the devil. 5 Furthermore, he must have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he does not fall into disgrace and the devil’s trap. 6 Deacons, likewise, should be worthy of respect, not hypocritical, not drinking a lot of wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 7 They must also be tested first; if they prove blameless, then they can serve as deacons. 8 Wives, too, must be worthy of respect, not slanderers, self-controlled, faithful in everything. 9 Deacons are to be husbands of one wife, managing their children and their own households competently. 10 For those who have served well as deacons acquire a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A This church leader has been called “a bishop” (KJV). The term paints a compelling picture of a person who serves as a pastor today with the responsibility as a manager of the church’s work.
B Don’t “give people a reason to criticize him” (NCV)
C Completely faithful and devoted to the person to whom he is married
D “He must welcome strangers in his home” (GNT).
E He’s a capable leader of his family who manages “in a manner worthy of full respect” (NIV).
F “Judgment” (NIV); “be judged guilty just as the devil was” (NCV)
G The devil is always looking to “steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10).
H Servant-leaders or “church helpers” (GNT). The picture is of someone who serves others by running an errand or being a waiter (2 Cor. 3:6; Eph. 3:7; Phil. 1:1; Col. 4:7).
I Living a lie by pretending to believe what they say; “double-tongued” (NASB)
J The “revealed truth” (GNT) about Jesus Christ
K Watch them for a while to see how well they carry out other tasks in the church.
L Women aren’t excused from living out the standard for servants in the church.
M “Not malicious gossips” (NASB)
N “Increased confidence” (NLT)
1. A PASTOR’S HEART (1 Tim. 3:1)
   • Paul affirmed those who wanted to be leaders in their local church, especially the men who desired to be overseers.

2. A PASTOR’S CHARACTER
   (1 Tim. 3:2-7)
   • Paul listed the qualities required of those wishing to serve as pastors.

3. A DEACON’S CHARACTER
   (1 Tim. 3:8-13)
   • Paul listed the qualities required of those wishing to serve as deacons.
   • Briefly identify the two understandings of verse 11 without endorsing one over the other.
   • Emphasize women living in a way that honored God.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

Godly leaders are needed to lead healthy churches.
• Believers must consider what role God desires them to play in their local church.
• Believers can affirm men who demonstrate the qualities of faithful pastors.
• Believers should seek to live lives that honor God through service.
DISCUSSION PLAN

FOCUS ATTENTION
Consider the most effective or healthy church that you’ve personally experienced. What were some characteristics of the leaders?

• For optimal health, every church needs godly, faithful leaders.
• Pastors not only assume responsibility for leading the church’s ministries and mission, but the pastor serves as an example of a well-lived Christian life.
• The impact of godly pastors goes far beyond the church body to reach an observant community.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE
1 TIMOTHY 3:1
Because pastors are held in such high regard, does that mean every Christian should aspire to join the ranks of church staff?

• The understanding that the church achieves maximum impact under visionary, faithful leaders can be a powerful reason to consider whether God is calling you to be a pastor.
• Discerning that God has placed a call on your life for pastoral leadership demands that you respond in obedience.
• Although an honorable profession, pastoral ministry comes with qualifiers, and the Scripture also clarifies that God calls us to different roles (Eph. 4:11-16).

1 TIMOTHY 3:2-7
Why is it so important that the church call godly, qualified pastors?

• God has deemed the position of pastor as one to hold both honor and responsibility; the stakes are too high for casual commitment.
• Carelessness in the pastorate may result in great damage within the church.
• A church in the hands of an untrustworthy pastor opens the gospel to scrutiny and doubt by the community it’s supposed to serve. Meanwhile, the eternal salvation of people is at stake.

What insights may we gain from the detailed list of qualifications for being a pastor?

• Although every person can be deemed a sinner, being “above reproach” (v. 2) means the pastor can’t be labeled or defined by a certain kind of prevalent sin but instead exhibits ongoing sterling character.
• Some of the qualifications point to a practical skill set that serve pastors well in ministry: able to teach, a friendly and generous host, a capable manager.
• A good family manager has learned to prioritize marriage and parenting faithfully.
• The church is often compared to a family; therefore, someone who manages a family well will have insights into managing a church.

1 TIMOTHY 3:8-13
In what ways are the qualifications for a deacon similar to a pastor?

• Like pastors, deacons are to exhibit top-notch character traits that empower them to bypass the pitfalls of addiction, financial mismanagement, and broken family relationships.
• Deacons also should have these qualifications on full display long before they are called to be church leaders.

How should we apply the detailed references to the wives of church leaders in church life?

• The command to be faithful in everything paints the portrait of a balanced, godly woman who maintains good relationships with her family, church, workplace, and community.
• While there’s room for debate on how to interpret the prerequisite that pastors and deacons should be the husbands of but one wife, that interpretation rightfully belongs to the local church to decide.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE
Despite the high standards and steep responsibilities associated with these positions of leaderships, why should people aspire to these roles?

• Scripture is clear that those who desire to serve in this capacity aspire to something noble, and those who serve well are to be commended.
• Being called to serve by a church who takes these standards to heart means the leader’s faithful witness has been noted and approved by other faithful people.
• Capable leadership empowers the church to do great things in service to Christ. How sad it would be if Christ’s followers declined to serve for fear of failure.

Understanding the focus these positions have been given in Scripture, how much attention should a church give when selecting leaders?

• Due diligence requires that churches lovingly but carefully examine the lives of potential leaders before calling them.
• Knowingly compromising on any standards risks compromising the gospel in the eyes of other believers and unbelievers.
• Upholding the standards as they have been defined by Scriptures puts the church in a position of trust and safeguards its future.

Personal Challenge: Evaluate yourself on your own Christlikeness, and then through prayer ask God to evaluate you, too. Pray for your church’s leaders and consider ways you can bless their faithfulness.
A SUPERHERO FIGURE

Before the session, find a superhero figure to bring to the group. It can be a child’s toy or a comic book rendering. Select a non-controversial character that models good character traits, even if that character has flaws.

Show the group the figure you selected. Inquire whether as children group members were fascinated with the idea of superheroes. Talk about the continuing prevalence of superheroes in popular culture. Ask: What makes this character before you a superhero? After pointing to super strength or other traits, steer the conversation to discuss the character traits that separate the superhero from ordinary people: Is the superhero courageous? Does he or she have a strong sense of truth and justice?

Inquire what Bible characters assumed something close to the status of a superhero (ex.: David’s giant-slaying ability, Samson’s supernatural strength, Paul’s snake charming). Compare those Bible figures to contemporary church leaders. Emphasize that the same all-powerful God who worked through these biblical heroes works through today’s leaders.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

When we study the list of traits for overseers and helpers in the church in 1 Timothy 3, we come to understand more about the roles of pastors and deacons. We also get a clearer picture of the tasks the Lord intends them to carry out in the fellowship of the church. Pastors lead the church so its congregation can carry out kingdom work, and deacons render service in keeping with the same task. Together, they work with the congregation to extend the kingdom of God by lifting up Christ. They share the good news about Christ in the community, around the world, and everywhere in between so people will come to know Christ and then grow toward spiritual maturity in Him.

Because such crucial work absolutely must be accomplished in the church, we do well to observe the list of qualifications for pastors and deacons noted in the passage. How many of the qualifications in the lists pertain to the development of skills for effectiveness? Only one qualification comes close. It relates to a pastor’s teaching skills. He needs to be able to instruct God’s people adequately (1 Tim. 3:2). No other qualification in either of the two lists has much to do with refined skills for leadership, management, or communication.

What lies at the heart of the qualifications listed in the passage? The qualifications swirl around one critical issue: character. What matters most is whom we have become, not what we can do. And of course, character development for followers of Christ centers in becoming more like Him. For Paul, therefore, exhibiting the character traits of Christ serves as the foundation for effectiveness for church leaders and servants.

Paul wasn’t alone in his perspective. Earlier, the apostles set apart a unique group of men to help them with a problem that seemed to be festering in the new church. They based their choice of men on traits of spiritual maturity, not skills in political diplomacy, human relations, or conflict resolution (see Acts 6:1-6). Centuries earlier, Jethro advised his son-in-law, Moses, to enlist some men to help him as he led God’s people to the promised land. He advised Moses to choose men who exhibited spiritual maturity and strength (Ex. 18:21). For Jethro, godly character mattered most of all.

Wise believers today value Christian character. We know that skills for church ministry in the church matter, but exhibiting the character of Christ matters more.
SESSION 4
STAYING ON COURSE

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-13

1 Now the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will depart from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons, through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared. They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods that God created to be received with gratitude by those who believe and know the truth.

2 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, since it is sanctified by the word of God and by prayer.

3 If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished by the words of the faith and the good teaching that you have followed.

4 But have nothing to do with pointless and silly myths. Rather, train yourself in godliness.

5 For the training of the body has limited benefit, but godliness is beneficial in every way, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

6 This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance.

7 For this reason we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

8 Command and teach these things.

9 Don’t let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. Until I come, give your attention to public reading, exhortation, and teaching.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A The time between the beginning of Jesus’ ministry and His return

B Demonic influences would tell them lies and fool them.

C The word for “seared” in the original language calls to mind a hot iron branding the skin, leaving it numb and insensitive. The liars would feel nothing at all for the people they were deceiving.

D They “teach that it is wrong to marry” (GNT).

E Hearts full of “gratitude” (NASB).

F “Acceptable to God” (GNT); “made holy” (ESV). Paul also used the word “sanctified” to describe the purity of an offering (Rom. 15:16), believers (1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 5:23), and the church (Eph. 5:26).

G “Feed yourself spiritually” (GNT); “trained” (ESV).

H Getting the body physically fit.

I Seeking to live in the center of God’s will, Paul prioritized godliness often in his letters to Timothy and Titus (1 Tim. 2:2; 3:16; 4:7-8; 6:3,5-6; 2 Tim. 3:5, Titus 1:1). Growing in godliness requires believers to engage in daily spiritual exercise.

J Paul affirmed that God is our Deliverer (1 Tim. 1:1, 2:3; Titus 1:3, 2:10, 2:17, 3:4; Eph. 5:23). John also used the same reference for God (1 John 4:14-15).

K Embrace godliness and instruct believers about it.

L Of the Scriptures when they gathered for worship.

M “Encouraging the believers” (NLT); “strengthen them” (NCV).

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1. BE AWARE (1 Tim. 4:1-5)
   • Paul explained that false teachers will rise in the last days and will cause some to fall away from the faith.
   • Paul reminded Timothy that the things forbidden by the false teachers are things created by God with a God-honoring purpose.
   • Affirm the security of believers.

2. BE DISCIPLINED (1 Tim. 4:6-10)
   • Paul called on Timothy to be disciplined in his life and challenged other believers to do the same.
   • Instead of turning to speculative teachings, believers are to focus on godliness and the gospel.

3. BE AN EXAMPLE (1 Tim. 4:11-13)
   • Paul instructed Timothy to focus on teaching the gospel, gaining a hearing for it by the godly life he lived.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS
Believers must be nourished on God’s Word so they will know the truth.
   • Believers must be aware that false teachers will try to lead them astray.
   • Believers must be disciplined in their lives, seeking to honor God through living out the gospel.
   • Believers must remain focused on God’s Word to be an example of godly living.
FOCUS ATTENTION

How does a diet of fruits, vegetables, and lean meats compare to a steady diet of fried or fatty junk foods? How does it compare to spiritual food?

• Junk foods are often more tempting, but they offer little nutritional benefit and may put us at risk for such problems as high cholesterol, diabetes, strokes, heart damage, and so on.

• Some foods appear healthy at first glance but may be full of preservatives that have their own detrimental effects.

• A healthy diet of fresh foods provides energy, strength, and preserves physical lives in the same way that God’s pure Word energizes, strengthens, and preserves our spiritual lives.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-5

When we consider people who promote false teachings, why should we take their misdirection very seriously?

• Paul uses harsh words to warn us to examine false teachers carefully, looking beyond ideas to intentions.

• The desire to pervert God’s teachings stems from something much more sinister than simple confusion or doubt; it is the by-product of those who have rejected the faith and been led astray by the demonic.

How can we distinguish false teachings from truth?

• False doctrines often apply additional, unnecessary burdens to God’s laws.

• At their heart they contradict God by compelling the rejection of God’s good gifts, beginning with the commonplace, such as certain foods, but ending with matters of eternal consequence—salvation.

Why is the reminder that God gives us good things tied to warnings about false teachers?

• Evoking guilt and fear are common tactics used by false teachers to first coerce and then control their followers.

• Because God is good, He dispenses good things from His hands.

• Instead of being controlled by fear, we control things as we accept God’s gifts with thanksgiving and prayer.

1 TIMOTHY 4:6-10

What practical steps should we take to counter false teaching?

• Methodical, regular study of God’s Word trains us to deftly identify and discard false teachings as we encounter them.

• Instead of entertaining foolish ideas that masquerade as the newest spiritual truths, we should studiously avoid them.

What makes the spiritual comparison to body building such an apt analogy for contemporary life?

• Applying the same “no pain, no gain” philosophy to living out the gospel means setting long-term goals for spiritual health.

• Like a regular regimen of exercise, godliness requires daily application of God’s Word.

1 TIMOTHY 4:11-13

How should we measure our spiritual progress?

• Youth have the advantage of fresh, strong voices; the more mature resonate with life experience—but all may share in the gospel. Just as Timothy was set apart, God has anointed each of us for purposes He expects us to fulfill.

• Beyond checking off a daily to-do list of godliness, pay attention to feedback from others. Asking for your counsel or thanking you for encouraging words indicates that they have observed your life and been impacted by it.

• Be self-aware. Your spiritual progress affects more than just you; it has a ripple effect that spreads to everyone in your direct sphere of influence as well as to unknown people and touchpoints.

• Silence isn’t acceptable; we’ve been tasked with publicly displaying the promotion of truth.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

What can you do to promote God’s Word as nourishment for the soul?

• Faithfulness to God’s Word is both a personal and corporate challenge for Christians.

• Thorough, regular study of God’s Word is important, including memorizing and meditating on Scripture.

• Dive deep into Scripture by absorbing the teaching of other godly Christians as well as sharing yourself. Teachers often testify that they learn more than they share.

• Keep in mind your responsibility to be a good example by approaching the Christian life with the single-minded focus of a distance runner. You have a race to run—and run well.

• Personal Challenge: What goals have you set for the next step in achieving godliness? Prayerfully consider whether you have adopted a “no pain, no gain” approach to spiritual training or been aimlessly jogging through life. Going deeper may entail getting up earlier, staying up later, or giving up a pastime to spend more time in God’s Word. Assess yourself and then consider asking a spiritual mentor to help you set specific goals for yourself, as Paul did for Timothy.
### MASTERPIECES BY FAMOUS ARTISTS

To prepare, research and print copies of one or two well-known, valuable paintings by famous artists. Prepare brief summaries of the history of the paintings/artists to share interesting tidbits with the group. If possible, make the prints large enough to display on easels, or make printed copies to pass around the room as you discuss. Invite the group to share their opinions on what makes the painting(s) so appealing and therefore so valuable. Remind them that people who haven’t studied art may not fully appreciate the artistry.

Introduce the topic of counterfeit artwork: *Forgers certainly have some artistic talent, but they usually resort to forgery because they never achieve the respect or following of the original artist.* Point out that authenticating original artwork often requires thorough examinations with sophisticated ultraviolet and infrared analysis.

*Say:* Art forgers remind us of false teachers who promote a counterfeit gospel. Forged artwork contains flaws and never quite lives up to the original while swindling those who are duped by it.

*Explain:* When it comes to doctrine, contemporary Christians are not creating the masterpiece, God’s Word, but we’ve been tasked to help the world validate authentic Christian teaching and reject counterfeit messages from false teachers.

*Say:* Like recognizing a famous painting for what it’s worth, knowing the Bible requires the expertise of Christians who have diligently studied it and tried to replicate its teaching—not the masterpiece but the Master.

### FOLLOW THE LEADER

Paul encouraged Timothy to lead God’s people back to Him. Apparently, the folks in the Ephesian church had drifted far away from the Lord, thanks to teachers who had led them astray. Getting them on the right path would be difficult. In order to do so, Timothy would need to guide them to restore their devotion to Christ. Accomplishing such a critical yet difficult initiative would require Paul to use the best tools available to him. Paul pointed Timothy to one of the most effective tools when he instructed him to “set an example” of a growing believer (1 Tim. 4:12). Being an example for others to follow would provide Timothy with what he needed so he could lead Christians toward spiritual renewal.

In Paul’s personal work with the Corinthian church, he demonstrated that he knew the value of a good example. When he wrote his epistle to the Christians there, he reminded them of the model of Christlike behavior he had established. Then he challenged them to “imitate” (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1) the example he had set for them.

In the same way, Paul directed the believers at Thessalonica to remember the model he had given them of his own relationship with Christ and to apply it as they grew in Him:

*For you yourselves know how you should imitate us: We were not idle among you; we did not eat anyone’s food free of charge; instead, we labored and toiled, working night and day, so that we would not be a burden to any of you. It is not that we don’t have the right to support, but we did it to make ourselves an example to you so that you would imitate us (2 Thess. 3:7-9).*

The tool that Paul used with Christians in the first century continues to be effective for followers of Christ in the twenty-first century. When we use it well, we can help other believers grow toward spiritual maturity. For that reason, we’re wise when we take seriously the model of discipleship that the Lord has established for us.
SESSION 5
BEING RESPONSIBLE

1 TIMOTHY 5:1-8, 17-21

1. Don’t rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters with all purity. 2. Support widows who are genuinely in need. 4. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them learn to practice godliness toward their own family first and to repay their parents, for this pleases God. 5. The widow who is truly in need and left all alone has put her hope in God and continues night and day in her petitions and prayers; however, she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. 7. Command this also, so that they will be above reproach. 8. But if anyone does not provide for his own family, especially for his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever...

17. The elders who are good leaders are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. 18. For the Scripture says: Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain, and “The worker is worthy of his wages.” 19. Don’t accept an accusation against an elder unless it is supported by two or three witnesses. 20. Publicly rebuke those who sin, so that the rest will be afraid. 21. I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels to observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing out of favoritism.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A. “Don’t be harsh or impatient” (The Message)
B. Make your appeal or plea respectfully.
C. Paul’s expressed his concern that widows be shown respect and receive the help they need. James also directed believers to care for widows (Jas. 1:27). Luke showed how caring for widows mattered to Jesus (Luke 4:25-26; 20:47; 21:2-3).
D. Put their devotion to God to work (ESV)
E. They serve God by helping their parents like their parents helped them when they were children.
F. “To pray and to ask God for help” (NIV)
G. She lives only to please herself because seeking selfish pleasure matters most of all to her.
H. “Turned against the faith” (NCV)
I. Church leaders; the only specific reference to the ministry of elders is in James 5:14-15.
J. “Double pay” (GNT); “paid well” (NLT)
L. “Do not listen” (GNT) unless credible evidence is available from trusted sources.
M. “Reprimanded in front of the whole church” (NLT)
N. “Chosen angels” (CEV) who watch over the congregation as believers served the Lord together.
O. “Without showing any prejudice or favor to anyone in anything you do” (GNT)
1. RESPECT ALL (1 Tim. 5:1-2)
   • Paul compared the church to a family with respect being given to each member.
   • The church leader is to demonstrate care for those in the church he is called to lead.
   • Emphasize the mutual nature of respect.

2. CARE FOR WIDOWS (1 Tim. 5:3-8)
   • Paul called on Timothy to lead the church to minister to the needs of widows.
   • He emphasized holding family members accountable for the care of their parents while making concessions for those women with no family to whom they could turn.

3. CARE FOR PASTORS (1 Tim. 5:17-21)
   • Paul taught that the local church’s pastoral leadership deserved to be supported financially and treated with respect.
   • Unsupported accusations against pastoral leaders should be rejected, but warranted discipline should be fair, open, and redemptive.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS
Believers should care for others, including widows and ministers.
• Believers are to treat each other as respected family members.
• Believers are to help take care of the needs of faithful believers who face life alone.
• Believers are responsible to God for the support they provide their pastoral leadership.
FOCUS ATTENTION

Whom are you obligated to care for in your daily life?
What roles do you fill for them?

• While our parents care for us until we’re adults, most would agree that self-care becomes our responsibility. Society acknowledges an unwavering obligation to care for the children we parent. Married people commit to their spouses with the understanding that mutual care encompasses sickness and health. Conscientious children often accept responsibility for the care of aging parents.
• As Christians, we have these roles and an additional set of obligations for care.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE
1 TIMOTHY 5:1-2

What role do church leaders have in the spiritual care of others?

• Defining the church as a family relationship implies an inherent and equivalent structure to the home where love, care, and respect for one another take precedence.

What age and gender distinctions do we find here that we should carry over to the workplace or community?

• Choosing encouragement as the method for urging older men to righteousness respects their age and experience and prevents a younger leader from falling into the trap of arrogance.
• Consistently treating women like mothers and sisters entails a level of courtesy and respect that naturally creates harmony and dispels suspicion.

1 TIMOTHY 5:3-8

Why do you suppose Paul spelled out such detailed instruction for the care of widows?

• The plights of widows, especially aging women who do not have the earning power to be self-sufficient, remains a crisis of care for those who find themselves in that situation.
• The directions for widow care is more evidence of God’s compassion for the underdogs of this world and should be a warning to be careful how we treat them.

What principles should be followed today for the care of widows?

• God holds family members accountable to serve as the first responders in caregiving for widows.
• Leading the church to accept responsibility to help care for faithful widows who have no family is a demonstration of God’s compassion.
• Becoming widowed is not a reason for despair. Widowhood offers a unique opportunity to trust God and turn to Him for provision and protection.

What do the stern words Paul reserved for negligent family members tell you about how seriously God takes these relationships?

• When we ignore the needs of our family whom God has entrusted to our care, our failure ranks with denying a dying Christ on the cross.
• Not accepting obligations of care puts us on the same level as unbelievers, who may be ignorant of their moral obligations.

1 TIMOTHY 5:17-21

Why would Paul include pastors as a special class of people who are entitled to the care of churches?

• Hard work deserves its reward, and incentivizing pastors’ efforts not only encourages them to keep it up but demonstrates God’s love for them.
• Pastors who dedicate their lives to the church usually haven’t had other opportunities to amass financial support.

When dealing with church leaders, what specifics did Paul give about the unique pastoral role?

• Refusing to entertain unsupported accusations prevents the leader from being needlessly derailed by false accusations or determined critics.
• Discipline that’s warranted but redemptive serves as an example to others and a striking reminder that no one is above God’s laws, and we all have a way back into God’s favor.
• By taking to heart Paul’s reminder to avoid prejudice and favoritism, we stand a much better chance of avoiding church-wide conflicts and managing our relationships with our leaders.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

How can we know we’re meeting our obligations to the people whom God has entrusted to our care?

• Paying attention to the special classes of people that Paul highlighted in this passage helps us respond appropriately with the care that God expects us to provide.
• Reviewing our relationships inside and outside of the church and looking for signs of neglect, indifference, or division will help us focus on those who need attention.
• Having concern for those who should receive special considerations for care will help us meet our spiritual obligations.

Personal Challenge: Review your obligations to others, especially in the church. Do you treat them as Paul directed Timothy? Think about the widows you know, especially church or family members. How can you and the church further provide for their care? How can your church effectively honor and support your pastor?
OBJECT LESSON

A CUP AND A CARDBOARD SIGN

Secure a cup, hat, or other container that will serve as a makeshift collection receptacle. Be prepared to seed the cup with a few coins and dollar bills. Also prepare a cardboard sign with the words *Homeless. Please help.*

Show the group the sign you prepared and prop the cup or other container next to it. Note that these items are common sights when someone begs for money. Spend a few minutes discussing feelings upon seeing someone begging for money. Ask: *Do you feel compassion, guilt, fear, or helplessness?* Read 1 Timothy 5:1-21, emphasizing that Paul’s instructions to Timothy reminds the church to care for the needs of widows and pastors.

Briefly reiterate that Paul gave special instructions for caring for widows and pastors, but mutual concern should be offered to everyone in the church family. Point out that refusing to give someone the respect that should be automatically afforded them as a fellow believer means that some people find themselves in the position of begging for respect and care with their hats in their hands.

ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE CHURCH

Church discipline has become quite a topic of discussion among Christians these days. For some believers, it’s a troublesome topic because of the painful images in their minds of church members being expelled from the fellowship because of sinful behavior. For others, however, it’s welcomed as a biblical practice that’s been forgotten in too many churches for too long. In their opinion, too few churches practice church discipline and too many wandering believers need it.

Paul’s instruction to Timothy gives us an approach to church discipline that’s healthy. It’s an approach that includes two necessary components: preventive discipline and corrective discipline. His directive regarding widows serves as an example of preventive discipline. Study the text and observe the care given to choosing widows in the church who need to be helped (1 Tim. 3:3-8). In this passage, Paul gave an example of preventing problems before they emerge by establishing and reinforcing standards of accountability for God’s people. With the standard presented clearly, church members can choose wisely how they will help individuals and families in a way that honors the Lord. As this passage shows us, accountability makes a huge difference.

Of course, corrective discipline cannot be ignored. In the passage about taking care of elders, Paul takes us down the difficult road of holding church leaders accountable for their sinful behavior (vv. 17-21). Wise Christians don’t take that road easily, and we tend to hold off for a long time before we take such a difficult step. But as the text implies, the painful work of confronting sinful behavior in the lives of church leaders leads to a fresh awareness that none of us can escape accountability. No believer lives above or beyond the mandate of godliness.

Accountability among Christians served as a theme for Paul’s other epistles. For instance, he underscored the value of preventing believers from drifting into behavior that dishonored the Lord with his instruction regarding marriage and family (Eph. 5:22–6:3). By affirming a standard of behavior at home, believers demonstrated the kind of spiritual discipline that prevented problems from growing. Another example involved Paul’s directive to the Corinthian church about correcting the behavior of an incestuous church member. Instead of overlooking the issue, Paul called the church to action. Such sinful behavior had to be confronted, and the person engaging in it had to be held accountable (1 Cor. 5:1-8). Whether preventive or corrective, Christians helped each other through accountability so they could become stronger in Christ.
SESSION 6
LASTING INVESTMENTS

1 TIMOTHY 6:6-19

6 But godliness with **contentment** is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. 8 If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. 9 But those who want to be rich **fall** into temptation, a trap, and many **foolish and harmful desires**, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many **griefs**. 11 But **you, man of God**, flee from these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, **endurance**, and gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of eternal life to which you were **called** and about which you have **made a good confession** in the presence of many witnesses. 13 In the presence of God, who gives life to all, and of Christ Jesus, who **gave a good confession** before **Pontius Pilate**, I charge you 14 to keep this command without fault or failure until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 God will bring this about in his own time. He is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, 16 who alone is immortal and who lives in **unapproachable light**, whom no one has seen or can see, to him be honor and eternal power. Amen. 17 Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy. 18 Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share, 19 **storing up treasure** for themselves as a good foundation for the **coming age**, so that they may take hold of what is truly life.
1. TRUE CONTENTMENT (1 Tim. 6:6-10)
   - Paul issued a warning against greed and depending solely on one’s wealth for one’s security.
   - Paul reminded Timothy that true contentment can only be found in godliness.
   - Explain that the issue was the love of money (greed) as opposed to having possessions.

2. TRUE RICHES (1 Tim. 6:11-16)
   - Paul reminded Timothy that true riches are found in lives that reflect Christ’s character.
   - He stated that Christians live in light of God’s promise of eternal life to those who put their faith in Christ.

3. STEWARDS OF GOOD WORKS (1 Tim. 6:17-19)
   - Paul addressed the wealthy, directing them to remember God’s grace and the responsibility that comes with that grace.
   - He directed them to focus on good works instead of their riches, seeking to be stewards of God’s gracious provisions.
   - Note: Emphasize wise stewardship of all possessions.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS
Believers should be motivated by the value of living a godly life as opposed to material gain.
- Believers find purpose and contentment by pursuing godliness.
- Believers are to live in light of the promise of eternal life.
- Believers are to use what they have to bless others.
FOCUS ATTENTION

What would most people say they need to feel secure?
- A steady job with good benefits provides most people with confidence in their economic security. Consistent, positive reports from a doctor contribute to a sense of physical well-being. Being surrounded by smart, competent, and responsible people makes us feel safe.
- Knowing our purpose in life helps most people, but especially Christians, to walk confidently into the future.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1 TIMOTHY 6:6-10

What barriers should we remove to achieve contentment? What bridges should we erect to reach it?
- Paul emphasized that contentment is a godly goal and the secret to true riches.
- Acknowledging the profound truth that our lives never depend on external or environmental trappings requires regular monitoring of our priorities for accumulating wealth and possessions.
- Sincere, daily thanksgiving to God for food and clothing naturally move us into a place of contentment, even when we’re initially reluctant to go there.
- Seeking God’s priorities for living through prayer and Bible study leads us “beside quiet waters” (Ps. 23:2) instead of into the rat race of life.

How do we measure our love of money, which the Bible warns is the root of all kinds of evil?
- Debt, especially accumulated for unnecessary things, may be an indicator.
- Well-paying jobs that regularly take us away from church and the community of faith may be a sign that we love money.
- Ecclesiastes 5:10 tells us that those who love money are “never satisfied.” Finding a place of contentment means we can live with less instead of more.

How does loving money lead to destruction?
- Scores of marriages and families break apart when someone chases wealth instead of relationships.
- The mountains of debt accumulated from the desire for material things threaten to leave people without resources.
- Those who end up in the lap of luxury often find themselves there without the deeper purposes of life to give them meaning.

1 TIMOTHY 6:11-16

What significance do Paul’s descriptors of running and fighting tell us about the goal of achieving true riches?
- Running and fighting, even the good fight, imply proactive effort, not just sitting back and waiting for it to come to you.
- While salvation isn’t earned by our good works, taking hold of eternal life suggests that we must lay claim and cling to God’s blessings in our earthly existence.

What do we understand about the context for setting earthly goals, even godly ones?
- We must never lose sight of the big picture. We strain to lead godly lives on earth in light of the promise of eternal life.
- Paul directed Timothy’s attention back to Jesus Christ, who remains our inspiration. Without Him, all of our pursuits would be misguided or empty.

1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19

Understanding that wealth in itself isn’t inherently evil, how do Paul’s warnings for the wealthy apply in everyday life?
- Acknowledging that God provides everything, even wealth, will help us to remain humble as we achieve success and accumulate material goods.
- Sharing with others from our abundance helps keep selfish desires in check even while we enjoy what He has provided.

How do we show others that our faith isn’t in our wealth?
- Just as our neighbors see where we live and the cars we drive, they also should be able to observe the way we live—in faith and service to Christ.
- Generosity includes service and performing good works, not just giving money to a cause.
- If we have visible means of support, those who are rich in worldly goods also must also bear witness to their invisible support found only in Jesus Christ.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

How does your budget show trust in God?
- Prioritizing good works above worldly success will increase our favor with God and point others to Him.
- Calculating how you spend your time will help you determine your priorities and what might need adjustment.
- Tracking your expenditures over time can reveal whether you’re pursuing wealth at the expense of godliness. When do you have enough?
- Rating yourself when it comes to sharing and generosity will reveal where your heart is.

Personal Challenge: Record your financial goals for active participation in good works. Include the steps you need to get there. But instead of making it a to-do list, make it your prayer list and go back to it frequently to see where you’re going—and how far you’ve come.

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OBJECT LESSON

A TREASURED COIN OR PIECE OF JEWELRY

Identify an object in your home that you bought because you wanted it even though it had a low intrinsic value. This could be a piece of jewelry not worn, a coin not circulated, or a treasured item that wasn’t expensive but has meaning to you.

Show the group the object. Share the story of how you acquired the item and why it has value to you. Encourage the group to share their own stories of valuable but worthless possessions.

Say: Wealth is a lot like that; it’s nice to have around, but it’s not the end goal. And sometimes, it may even cost you to keep it. Note that there’s nothing wrong with owning something of value, but it’s important to keep such items in their proper place of importance.

Ask: Have you ever made the mistake of placing the wrong emphasis on acquiring worldly wealth? When it happens, it means we may miss out on the more valuable godly life or even destroy what we have. We could end up with something the world has deemed valuable, but sooner or later we’ll realize it really isn’t. Like the item in this object lesson, we’ll figure out in time that it lacks the power to make us content or give us purpose.

Draw attention to the memory verse (1 Tim. 6:10). Say: Loving the right things in this world is important. Loving money has the power to destroy us. Help us, Lord, not to get the two confused.

DIG DEEPER

HE’S COMING BACK

On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus made a promise to His disciples that one day He would return for them (John 14:1-3). The disciples took Jesus’ promise seriously, and they lived with the awareness that He would come again for them one day. The promise of His return filled their lives with victorious hope. But equally important, it nourished within them the eagerness to serve Him faithfully. They wanted nothing more than to please Him with their service when they had the opportunity to see His face and worship Him in heaven.

The reality of Christ coming again filled Paul’s mind and heart as he engaged in one missionary journey after another. He told believers about the promise of Christ’s return, and he urged them to allow His promise to shape their lives, clarify their ambitions, strengthen their faith, and determine their service. For instance, Paul encouraged Christians in Rome to see themselves as perishable vessels that held the imperishable treasure of eternal life through Christ. He went on to urge them to embrace the reality that they would see Christ again (Rom. 8:18-25). He shared the same encouragement in his letter to the Philippian church (Phil. 1:20-21).

Wise believers today take to heart the promise about seeing Jesus return. We look forward to being with Him in heaven. As we wait for Him to take us home, we find that our greatest satisfaction comes from living according to His ways and carrying out His Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). When we read about the fruit of the Spirit, we want to display the cluster of character traits that allow people to see Christ in us (Gal. 5:22-23). Paul’s warning to Timothy about craving money reminds us about sinful priorities that can’t satisfy us for long. Quite the contrary, they can be dangerous distractions from our calls to serve Him.

However, when we live in light of Christ’s return, our ambitions shift to whatever pleases Him. Likewise, our actions show that we want to extend His kingdom to more people who might receive His gift of salvation and grow toward maturity in Him. Serving Jesus with His return in mind fuels our intention to make Him, His ways, and His kingdom our highest priorities (Matt. 6:10).
SESSION 7

CONFIDENCE

2 TIMOTHY 1:3-14

3 I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, when I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day. 4 Remembering your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. 5 I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and now, I am convinced, is in you also. 6 Therefore, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment. 8 So don’t be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God. 9 He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. 10 This has now been made evident through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 11 For this gospel I was appointed a herald, apostle, and teacher, and that is why I suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day. 12 Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 13 Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A "I remember your tears as we parted" (NLT).
B Paul consistently expressed joy regarding his relationships with other believers (Rom. 15:32; 2 Cor. 7:4; Phil. 1:4; 2:2; 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19-20; 3:9).
C Timothy’s heritage of faith included his grandmother, whom Paul exalted as a model of Christian faith and instrumental in nurturing the faith of her grandson.
D Timothy’s mother, a Jewish woman who became a Christian and whose husband was a Gentile.
E “Fan into flame” (NIV); “keep alive” (GNT)
F God’s gift to Timothy for ministry in the church; “that inner fire—the special endowment” (AMP)
G When Paul publicly affirmed Timothy’s gifts and “blessed” (TLB) him
H “Self-discipline” (NLT); “self-control” (ESV)
I Paul had formerly imprisoned Christians (Acts 8:3; 22:4; 26:10). While writing this letter to Timothy, Paul was in prison for serving God.
J “Be ready to suffer with me” (NLT); “continue to preach regardless of the circumstances” (AMP)
K Jesus and His disciples used “saved” often to describe what happens when people give their lives to Him (John 3:17; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:9; Heb. 7:25).
L “Broke the power of death” (NLT, TLB)
M “I have no regrets” (The Message)
N “The treasure [that precious truth]” (AMP)
1. HERITAGE (2 Tim. 1:3-5)
   • Paul pointed to Timothy’s religious heritage to encourage Timothy to remain faithful.

2. GIFTED (2 Tim. 1:6-7)
   • Paul reminded Timothy of his giftedness by the Holy Spirit.
   • He challenged Timothy to remain active, being bold in his giftedness.
   • Emphasize that all believers receive the Holy Spirit at conversion and are gifted for service.

3. UNASHAMED (2 Tim. 1:8-12)
   • Paul declared his assurance despite being persecuted for his faith in Christ.
   • His confidence wasn’t based on his own abilities but on his belief in Christ and the power of the resurrection.

4. LOYAL (2 Tim. 1:13-14)
   • Paul charged Timothy with following his example, carrying the gospel to others, and standing for the truth.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS
Believers can have confidence in Christ in all circumstances.
• Believers can find strength from those who invest in them spiritually.
• Believers can act boldly with the power of the Holy Spirit working through them.
• Believers can live with confidence knowing that Christ demonstrated His power through the resurrection.
• Believers are charged with delivering the gospel to the next generation.
FOCUS ATTENTION
When you think about how to raise children to be competent and confident adults, what would you say they most need?
• A stable home life supported by caring parents makes most children feel secure.
• Friends who accept and encourage us help us develop a healthy sense of self-esteem.
• Discovering what we’re good at also allows us to know where to focus our energies and understand God’s design and purpose for our lives.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE
2 TIMOTHY 1:3-5
How can we leverage our spiritual heritage to encourage current growth as believers?
• Remembering and praying for those who passed along the legacy of their faith reminds us of lessons we learned and makes those dear ones seem alive again.
• Being grateful for early teachings means we can move seamlessly into early spiritual maturity because we had the benefit of role models.
• We can emulate their examples and share our faith with our own children, or we can mentor others in the next generation.

2 TIMOTHY 1:6-7
How does the assurance of being blessed with spiritual gifts empower our witness?
• While the indwelling of these gifts isn’t formally observed through a laying on of hands for most of us, nonetheless the Scriptures assure us we possess them.
• Just as parents regularly assure their children that they have gifts and talents, we can be confident that the Holy Spirit has anointed us with gifts for sharing the gospel.
• With Christ we can step out in faith to attempt things for Christ we couldn’t do in our own strength.
• Trusting that God has given us power, love, and sound judgment means we can trust Him to work in our lives and strengthen our abilities to represent Christ well without endlessly second-guessing ourselves.

2 TIMOTHY 1:8-12
Why do Christians need reminders that we shouldn’t be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ?
• As Christians, we’re at odds with the secular culture, which tries to belittle, bully, and stigmatize our choices in order to minimize our impact and influence.
• Too often we ignore the persecution of other Christians when we aren’t directly affected; however, sharing in Christ’s sufferings also means supporting fellow believers through trials.
• The world dictated a shameful death for Christ. Unless we choose to see the glory of Christ through the eyes of faith, our natural tendency is to be ashamed.

How do our attitudes toward suffering dictate our abilities to withstand it?
• Although we glory in the cross, when we’re in the midst of suffering it doesn’t feel or look particularly glorious. Embracing the big picture of suffering helps us to bear up under it.
• Understanding that God is the ultimate guardian of our faith empowers us to do our parts. We stand up under pressure as people protecting a sacred trust.

2 TIMOTHY 1:13-14
How does loyalty to our leaders and spiritual mentors impact us when our faith is under fire?
• We can stay committed, knowing the teachings of our ancestors in the faith were solid and trustworthy.
• We can let the same faith and love they showed be our guide.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE
How does confidence in Christ drive the way you live and make you stand out in the world?
• No matter the circumstances, we can be confident that God is with us and empowering us to rise to the occasion.
• The blessing of a Christian heritage is one we can leverage for our personal growth and that of others.
• Knowing we’re supernaturally gifted to share the gospel should empower us to step out in faith.
• Understanding we must not give in to shame but be bold witnesses will help us suffer through external challenges to our faith.
• Remaining loyal to other believers will empower them—and us—to give us all fresh strength for the good fight.

Personal Challenge: Confidence in Christ grows as we embrace our spiritual heritage, suffer prosecution, remain unashamed in the process, and stay loyal to our fellow believers, who may be suffering as well. To grow your confidence in Christ, make a list of some of the ways He has seen you through trials. Gauge how you felt before the list with after. If your faith isn’t emboldened, list the victories of others. We serve a powerful God.
OBJECT LESSON

A MIRROR

Pass around a mirror, inviting each person to spend a few seconds looking at their reflections. After everyone has a turn, say: *Was that an uncomfortable experience?* Point to other scenarios where mirror gazing may be particularly uncomfortable, such as at the gym or in a dressing room. Suggest that what we see in the mirror may make us feel insecure because our reflections remind us of our flaws.

Remind the group that Paul wrote Timothy letters to help him take stock of his spiritual self. It was like looking in a mirror with Timothy to point out his spiritual assets and build his confidence. Paul assured Timothy, just as we sometimes need to be reassured, that he had been blessed with the background, experience, skills, and talent he needed to fulfill God’s purposes for him. Paul took pains, however, to reassure Timothy that it wasn’t simple self-confidence that would get him through. Say: *Self-confidence can be misplaced; confidence in Jesus Christ and trust in His power will carry the day.*

Remind the group that the Bible has been given to us to be a mirror into our souls. Through Scripture, we discover our shortcomings, but we’re also encouraged. As Paul assured Timothy, all believers have been equipped with everything needed to accomplish the purposes assigned to them by God. As our memory verse reminds us, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day” (2 Tim. 1:12).

TIMOTHY, PAUL’S SON IN THE FAITH

An ounce of affirmation is worth a pound of criticism and ten pounds of indifference. That’s an old saying filled with timeless wisdom. It’s especially true for believers who share the ups and downs of life together in Christian fellowship.

Paul certainly put the wisdom of affirmation to work as he tried to help Timothy. He and Timothy enjoyed a unique bond. Paul described his love for Timothy in his letters to the churches. He referred to Timothy as “God’s coworker” (1 Thess. 3:2) and his brother in the Lord (2 Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:1). He wrote that Timothy was his spiritual child (1 Cor. 4:17). In Paul’s letters to Timothy, however, he compared his relationship with Timothy to the affection a father would have for a son (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2:1).

Timothy had been given a tough assignment. Carrying it out took an obvious toll on him. The difficulty of his work, his separation from Paul, the news about Paul being arrested and imprisoned, as well as his obvious insecurity about his own abilities must have left him physically, emotionally, and spiritually weary. He needed the kind of affirmation only a spiritual father could give him.

Paul wanted Timothy to succeed in his work, and he used the powerful tool of affirmation to help him along the way. Notice the ways he affirmed Timothy and his ministry. First, he affirmed Timothy’s faith by connecting his trust in the Lord with the examples his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice set for him (2 Tim. 1:5). Apparently Timothy’s father wasn’t a Christian (Acts 16:1). However, Paul affirmed that Timothy’s walk of faith in the Lord bore a remarkable resemblance with the faith of Lois and Eunice.

Second, Paul affirmed Timothy’s gifts for effective ministry. He reminded his son in the ministry about his official affirmation of Timothy’s ministry gifts through the laying on of his hands. Along with the affirmation, Paul encouraged Timothy to use his gifts well (2 Tim. 1:6).

Third, Paul affirmed Christ’s work in Timothy. Because of Christ in his life, Timothy could rest assured that his work would make an eternal difference. Timothy had every reason to be bold as he served the Lord (2 Tim. 1:8). The timeless wisdom of affirmation then continues to pay huge dividends in the lives of believers now.
SESSION 8
FOCUSED

2 TIMOTHY 2:1-13

1 You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
2 What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 3 Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the concerns of civilian life; he seeks to please the commanding officer. 5 Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. 6 The hardworking farmer ought to be the first to get a share of the crops. 7 Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. 8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David, according to my gospel, 9 for which I suffer to the point of being bound like a criminal. But the word of God is not bound. 10 This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. 11 This saying is trustworthy:

For if we died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; 13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A Paul thought of Timothy as his child in the faith.
B God’s grace is His kindness to us because He loves us, even though we don’t deserve it (Rom. 3:24; 2 Cor. 8:9; Eph. 2:5-8; Heb. 4:16; Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5).
C “Reliable” (NIV) and “trustworthy people” (NLT)
D “Capable and qualified” (AMP)
E “The one who enlisted him” (NASB)—an analogy for a single-minded devotion to pleasing God
F Paul’s second analogy declared that a person must obey God’s rules in order to succeed.
G In this third analogy, Paul encouraged hard work by holding out the promise of blessing.
H Jesus’ messianic credentials included His being in the family line of King David (Matt. 15:22; Luke 18:38, 20:41; John 7:42; Rom. 1:3, Rev. 5:5).
I “Sitting in jail” (The Message); “chained” (NIV)
J Hebrews 4:12 says “the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”
K All who receive Christ; “God’s chosen ones” (GNT)
L Judas Iscariot permanently deserted Christ (Mark 14:10). Peter was a believer who denied Christ, but only temporarily and in a moment of weakness (Luke 22:54-62).
M “Christ cannot deny who he is” (CEV).

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1. FUTURE FOCUSED (2 Tim. 2:1-2)
   - Paul called on Timothy to pass on the things Paul had taught him to others who in turn could also teach others, and so on.
   - Timothy was to act out of the grace of Christ.

2. MISSION FOCUSED (2 Tim. 2:3-7)
   - Paul identified three images—a faithful soldier, the disciplined athlete, and the hard-working farmer—as symbols of the Christian life.
   - Paul exhorted Timothy to consider the lessons he could learn from these occupations and apply them to his life.

3. CHRIST FOCUSED (2 Tim. 2:8-13)
   - Paul challenged Timothy to remain focused on Jesus and His resurrection.
   - He explained that any hardship faced must be balanced with the potential of sharing the gospel with any and all.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

Believers can find strength for life’s hardships by focusing on God’s grace and the gospel.
- Believers are to invest in the lives of future church leaders.
- Believers must remain focused on the gospel when facing hardships, knowing God will reward their faithfulness.
- Believers can take strength in knowing that their faithful witness opens doors for the gospel to be heard and believed.
FOCUS ATTENTION

Who was your spiritual parent or mentor? Describe his or her qualities.
• Christians are encouraged to mentor others in the faith, helping build up the body of the church and share the love of God with those who don’t yet know Him.
• Having strong Christian examples to follow helps us endure hardships faithfully and achieve our God-given purposes.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

2 TIMOTHY 2:1-2
What’s the motivation for making a five- or ten-year life plan? Is there value in that for the Christian life?
• Many researchers point to the value of setting goals for various areas of our lives.
• Planning goals for the future means we don’t get so sidetracked by present circumstances but find purpose to stay the course.
• To accomplish future goals requires that we must meet the challenge of incremental steps, too.

How important is focusing on the future for the individual believer, the church, and the kingdom?
• Deciding early as Christians what kind of impact we want to have on our families and communities demands we order our steps accordingly.
• Without a plan for passing on the faith, the church decreases in power with each succeeding generation.
• Christians can’t complete their part in God’s redemptive plan without a strategy for reaching the next generation.

2 TIMOTHY 2:3-7
What can soldiers, athletes, and farmers teach us about staying focused on our mission?
• Military personnel operate under a strict chain of command. The soldier doesn’t act merely to please himself or follow popular opinion; he serves at the direction of his commanding officer.
• Athletes such as Olympians may spend years training relentlessly to meet a singular goal. Winning the prize means they aren’t only in superb condition but also understand exactly what it takes to come first in the competition.
• The farmer toils in season and out of season, trusting that what he planted will come to fruition at the proper time.

What insight did Paul give Timothy that can increase your focus on the mission?
• Meditation on Scripture increases understanding. Think deeply rather than contenting yourself with a shallow reading.
• Suffering and endurance are part of the Christian life, but we can lean on God for His guidance and grace.

2 TIMOTHY 2:8-13
What practical and inspirational measures can we employ to stay focused as Christians?
• The resurrection serves as a key focal point. Remembering the cross of Christ reminds and motivates us because of what Jesus gave up and what we gained from His sacrifice.
• Keep in mind that circumstances may seem to constrict us, but the gospel is unfettered. Regardless of how limited we may seem to be, there are no restrictions on the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
• Thinking about the privileges of an afterlife helps with endurance; it will be worth it.
• Whatever we must endure can be satisfactorily balanced with the satisfaction of knowing our faithful witness opens doors to the gospel.

How do verses 11-13 challenge us to remain faithful to sharing the gospel despite the hardships we face?
• Living and dying with Christ depends on both Jesus’ power and our acceptance.
• Likewise, rejection of Christ inevitably becomes a two-way street.
• When our humanity and fallen nature overtake us Jesus again steps in to save the relationship.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

When it comes to living out your Christianity, what do you do to stay focused?
• Focusing on the right things results in a strong, enduring, and others-centered faith. On the other hand, when we focus on the wrong elements, we’re more likely to end up as distracted, disillusioned, and wondering souls.
• A focus on the future helps us do our part to evangelize and disciple the next generation of believers.
• When we understand our mission and keep it central, we accomplish far more than we would’ve without being strategic.
• Unless we keep our minds on Jesus, we’ll lose heart; by His example we find fresh strength.

Personal Challenge: Would you say that you’re a focused person? Write goals for your Christian life for the next five to ten years. You might include such things as leading a family member or friend to Christ, sharing God’s Word on a regular basis through social media, volunteering to mentor students, or signing up for a mission to help plant a new church. Whatever God leads you to do, stay focused on the task.
AN OPTICAL ILLUSION

Use the Internet to search for a “literal optical illusion” (two or more images within one picture). Whatever picture you select, locate the different viewpoints before you show the image to the group.

During the session, distribute copies of the image or project the image on a wall. Invite volunteers to identify the object or objects they see in the image. Lead the group to call out the object they noticed first. Ask: Once you were aware of the other image, how did that change your perspective when viewing the image?

Discuss the process of locating the different images, noting that while we typically see one object when we first look at the picture, by shifting our focus, a second image appears.

Say: The rewards of eternity are a lot like finding more meaning within a picture. Point out that for many, eternity remains a hidden or elusive treasure, but by paying close attention, weeding out distractions, and remaining focused, we find the blessings to which we’re entitled through Jesus Christ.

SHAME VS. HONOR

Shame and honor take center stage when we study 2 Timothy 2:1-13. Most in our twenty-first-century Western culture strive toward individualism. We live to do what we consider to be best for us personally, even if nobody agrees with us. Accordingly, we don’t shame easily, and honor comes easily because we always feel free to pat ourselves on our own backs.

However, in Paul’s day, such rugged individualism didn’t abound. People didn’t want to be shamed by others, and they favored honor. Such a life principle could have developed from the glee that came from being honored and the pain associated with being shamed. The Roman Empire may have added to the “honor/shame” principle. Romans didn’t affirm free thinking or tolerate someone marching to the beat of a different drummer. For these and other reasons, people in the New Testament world seemed to accept living by the shame/honor principle. That’s probably why some of Jesus’ instruction had to do with the shame and honor of being humbled and exalted (Matt. 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14).

The life principles of shame and honor come into play when we reflect on the death of Christ. The cross ordinarily conveyed shame because the Romans used it to execute criminals. An instrument of shame, the cross became a signal of honor for believers. Granted, raising it up as a symbol of honor then would be like a man today placing an electric chair in the living room of his house and then telling everyone how it changed his life.

For Paul, being in jail for the good news of Christ brought honor, not shame. When Timothy heard that Paul had been arrested and chained (2 Tim. 2:9), the news could’ve left him ashamed. That’s why Paul encouraged him to connect his suffering to the cross of Christ. Notice how he pushed away shame by affirming the honor due to the Lord. First, He had the unique honor of overcoming death by being resurrected. Furthermore, He was honored to be in the family line of King David, from whom the Messiah would come. Equally notable, He reigns with “eternal glory” (v. 10), and faithful believers reign with Him. Therefore, Paul challenged Timothy to push through the pain like a devoted soldier, a top-shelf athlete, and a diligent farmer. The honor of following Christ drives away the shame that can creep in when we suffer because we belong to Him.
SESSION 9

DILIGENT

2 TIMOTHY 2:14-26

14 Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to fight about words. This is useless and leads to the ruin of those who listen. 15 Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn’t need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth. 16 Avoid irreverent and empty speech, since those who engage in it will produce even more godlessness, and their teaching will spread like gangrene. Hymenaeus and Philetus are among them. They have departed from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and are ruining the faith of some. 18 Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, bearing this inscription: The Lord knows those who are his, and let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness.

20 Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also those of wood and clay; some for honorable use and some for dishonorable. 21 So if anyone purifies himself from anything dishonorable, he will be a special instrument, set apart, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. 22 Flee from youthful passions, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. 23 But reject foolish and ignorant disputes, because you know that they breed quarrels. 24 The Lord’s servant must not quarrel, but must be gentle to everyone, able to teach, and patient, instructing his opponents with gentleness. Perhaps God will grant them repentance leading them to the knowledge of the truth. Then they may come to their senses and escape the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A “Facts” (AMP)—essential realities about faithfulness to Christ (see 2 Tim. 2:12-13)
B “Warn” (CEV); “command” (TLB)
C “Chips away at the faith” (The Message)
D Someone who seeks only God’s approval; “so God can say to you, ‘Well done’” (TLB)
E “Irreverent babble and godless chatter” (AMP)
F Leads people down a path that causes them to drift farther away from the Lord
G A deadly open sore that eats bodily tissue
H Paul proclaimed Hymenaeus as a blasphemer in 1 Timothy 1:20.
I In other letters, Paul had to address the lies being told about the resurrection of Christians (1 Cor. 15:12-21; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; 5:1-11; 2 Thess. 2:1-5).
J “Engraved on the stones” (The Message)
K “Confesses” (NIV); “worships” (CEV)
L “A well-furnished kitchen” (The Message)
M “The ones who stop doing evil” (CEV)
N “Infantile indulgence” (The Message)
O Paul often instructed believers to practice gentleness when they encountered difficult people (1 Cor. 4:21; Gal. 5:23; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12).
P “The devil ... makes them obey him” (CEV)

Date of My Bible Study: _________
1. TWO GROUPS (2 Tim. 2:14-19)
- Paul directed Timothy to diligently study God’s Word in contrast to others who were distracted by worldly philosophies.
- Timothy was to warn others, exposing the danger of basing one’s life on something other than the gospel.
- Paul reminded Timothy that the gospel is stronger than false teaching.

2. TWO VESSELS (2 Tim. 2:20-22)
- Paul challenged Timothy to flee sin and pursue righteousness so he could become useful in God’s service.
- He pointed to various pots and utensils in a house to illustrate that some have a place of honor by being cleaned of the things that contaminated them.

3. TWO APPROACHES (2 Tim. 2:23-26)
- Paul encouraged Timothy to avoid useless quarrels and instead offer the truth of the gospel.
- Timothy was to do so with gentleness and kindness, out of a hope that opponents to the gospel would repent and turn to Christ.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS
Believers find truth and direction by studying God’s Word.
- Believers must continue to study God’s Word to avoid being led astray.
- Believers must intentionally flee sin and pursue righteousness to be useful in God’s work.
- Believers are to present God’s Word to others with love and kindness.
FOCUS ATTENTION
If you were a teacher, what would you expect from your students to master a subject and excel in the classroom?
- Good students don’t just come to class; they read the assigned texts and do their homework.
- Students who approach a subject with curiosity and actively engage with the material not only master it faster but help other students in the process.
- Students who excel by diligence rather than innate brilliance also serve as good role models for weaker students.
- Those who excel, no matter what barriers they must overcome to do so, encourage their teachers too and remind them why they became teachers.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE
2 TIMOTHY 2:14-19
How may the knowledge you gain from Bible study inform the way you engage with others?
- Knowing the Word empowers us to redirect those who get carried away with worldly philosophies.
- When we’ve diligently studied God’s Word, we can correct others with authority instead of arrogance.
- A good grasp of what the Bible teaches also releases us from confusion when unbelievers challenge our convictions; we can cite Bible chapters and verses to back up what we say.

What teaching principles could you employ to clarify and drive home the gospel message?
- Keeping our speech simple and clear steers us away from confusing our listeners when we communicate.
- We must continually check ourselves to make sure our teaching matches up to truth; people can’t unhear miscommunication and misconceptions attributed to Scripture.
- We counter untruths, no matter how dangerous and contagious, with truth, being confident that God’s Word has the inherent power to trump false teaching.
- Repetition provides opportunity to learn as well as reminds the learners of what they already know. Just as Paul repeatedly pressed home truths to Timothy, we must teach, clarify, and reteach so that the message isn’t just learned but taken to heart and applied.

2 TIMOTHY 2:20-22
How does a commitment to studying God’s Word lead to practicing God’s Word?
- Mastering subject matter qualifies us as experts, able to teach others with greater understanding of applying the material.
- The discipline required to be excellent scholars is the same type of discipline we need to flee from sin and pursue righteousness.
- As we approach Scripture with a pure, teachable spirit, the Bible speaks to us and leads us in righteousness.

2 TIMOTHY 2:23-26
How does a poor attitude discredit a person’s message? What is needed for others to respect our witness?
- Avoiding debate for debate’s sake eliminates the opportunity for division and conflict without good reason. While there are certainly times when the integrity of the gospel calls for a spirited defense, many arguments are more speculative and not earnest searches for truth.
- Taking a gentle, patient approach when sharing actually assists the learner to become more teachable. Aside from the occasions when He encountered the stiff-necked Pharisees, Jesus modeled the characteristics and techniques of a good teacher: patient, repetitive as necessary, and providing life application.
- Knowing the truth from studying the Bible helps protect us from the enemy and helps us share God’s Word with patience and urgency.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE
What rewards of being Bible students should inspire us to increased diligence?
- The instruction to study God’s Word contains tantalizing promises that will propel us to higher callings and new heights as believers.
- Students of God’s Word perform valuable services in helping others understand the Scriptures.
- People who approach Bible study with discipline, diligence, and hearts to learn from God will become equipped for special service.
- Simply put, knowing the Scriptures helps us honor God.

Personal Challenge: How do you rate yourself when it comes to your handling of God’s Word? Do you approach Bible study with the heart of a scholar or take a lackadaisical approach? Even if you don’t aspire to be a teacher yourself, being able to reference doctrine and passages and discuss them with authority takes a lifetime of learning and discipline. Resolving to read the Bible regularly, participate in group studies where you can learn from another mature Christian, taking notes in church, and meditating on what you read are all vital steps to becoming proficient in God’s Word.
EVERYDAY OBJECTS, SUCH AS A TOOTHBRUSH, SOAP, AND SHOES

Before the session, gather a collection of items that you use every day, such as a toothbrush, soap, and shoes. Be careful to choose things that most people would also use on a regular basis.

Display the assortment of items you gathered, and ask the group what other tools or accessories they would include to help them have a full, complete, satisfying, and healthy day. Once you’ve entertained some of their suggestions, draw attention to a few of the items you brought. Point out the toothbrush, and suggest that it’s very important for oral health, but when used infrequently it doesn’t do much good. Suggest that shoes protect our feet, but if we wear them only occasionally and go barefoot the rest of the time, our feet will become calloused and possibly injured.

Say: All of these items have benefits to us, whether physical or emotional, but only when we use them over extended periods of time. Point out that reaping all the rewards of Bible study requires making it a daily habit, like brushing your teeth, but with benefits that far surpass mere physical health. Note that students of God’s Word learn life-application tips and wisdom directly from God Himself, and lessons learned can be shared with others to their benefit, too. Conclude by encouraging the group to take a disciplined approach to Bible study for their own good and the benefit of others.

DIG DEEPER

A WORTHY VESSEL

How useful do we want to be for the Lord? That question surfaces when we reflect on Paul’s instruction in 2 Timothy 2:14-26. At the beginning of this section of his letter, he warned us to avoid arguing with other believers over words. Why? Because such arguments turn out to be utterly “useless” (v. 14). Not much later in his letter, Paul encouraged us to live for Christ in a way that allows us to become vessels of honor. Why? Because he wants us to be as useful as possible to the Lord (vv. 20-26).

Cheri Fuller wrote a book entitled Dangerous Prayer. It contains stories about people who simply but sincerely asked the Lord to use them. Some of the stories came right out of the Bible, like the story of Hannah (1 Samuel 1–2) and the account of a nameless Samaritan woman’s conversation with Jesus at Jacob’s well (John 4). Fuller also shared stories about Christians today who dared to go beyond asking God only to bless them or to meet their needs. While she confirmed the value of those kinds of prayers, she went on to challenge Christians to consider what she called a dangerous prayer. She described a dangerous prayer by sharing what a pastor always said to his congregation. He told his church that the most dangerous prayer a believer could offer was simply, “Lord, use me.” Fuller goes on to say that what makes the prayer so dangerous is that God “just might answer you! Then you have to be willing and ready to do the work you are called to because you don’t know what will happen after you pray those words.”

The stories about how God uses His people beckon us to ask the Lord to use us as well. Following Paul’s instruction to Timothy, we’re compelled to ask the Lord to shape us so we can be useful to Him. This passage gives us a fresh perspective on Paul’s challenge to present our “bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Rom. 12:1).

1. Cheri Fuller, Dangerous Prayer (Uhrichsville, OH: Shiloh Run Press, 2015), 7. 2. Ibid.
SESSION 10

ENDURING

2 TIMOTHY 3:12-17; 4:1-8

12 In fact, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 13 Evil people and impostors will become worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, 15 and you know that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and because of his appearing and his kingdom:

2 Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching.

3 For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. 4 They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But as for you, exercise self-control in everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time for my departure is close. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 There is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all those who have loved his appearing.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A "Pursuing righteousness and are determined to live godly lives" (AMP)

B Believers should expect persecution and receive God's salvation for faithfully enduring it (Matt. 5:10-12; 10:16-23; John 15:20; 16:2).  

C Those who only pretend to be godly

D "As long as they are out there, things can only get worse" (The Message).  

E Don't allow such behavior to bother you.

F "Breathed out by God" (ESV)

G Showing us "what is wrong in our lives" (NLT); Jesus used the term often (Matt. 8:26; Mark 8:33).

H "Correction [of error and restoration to obedience]" (AMP)

I "The tasks God has for us" (The Message)

J "Keep your sense of urgency, whether the opportunity seems favorable or unfavorable, whether convenient or inconvenient" (AMP)

K "Whatever their itching ears want to hear" (NLT)

L Daily our flesh requires us to battle against it and “walk by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16).

M An offering described in the Old Testament (Gen. 35:14; Ex. 29:40-41; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:5-10)—usually the pouring of wine on the altar

N "Are eagerly looking forward to his coming back again" (TLB)
1. PERSECUTION COMING (2 Tim. 3:12-13)
• Paul explained that every believer will be persecuted in some way.
• He also stated that this persecution will gain momentum over time.
• Differentiate between oppression, bullying, and persecution.

2. GET EQUIPPED (2 Tim. 3:14-17)
• Paul challenged Timothy to remain faithful to Jesus regardless of what he may face.
• He reminded Timothy that the Scripture provides all that believers need to be equipped for God to use them.

3. PREACH HIS WORD (2 Tim. 4:1-4)
• Paul challenged Timothy to be faithful in preaching the gospel.
• Paul warned that some would rather hear a pleasing message, but Timothy must remain faithful to delivering the whole gospel.

4. FINISH WELL (2 Tim. 4:5-8)
• Paul called on Timothy to remain faithful to Christ.
• He pointed to himself as an example, knowing he would be put to death for his faith in Christ.
• Paul announced his resolve to finish his life well, knowing that eternity with the Lord lay beyond his execution.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS
Believers must remain faithful to God’s truth even when facing persecution.
• Believers shouldn’t be surprised when persecuted.
• Believers can trust the Scriptures as God’s Word.
• Believers must be ready to present the gospel at all times.
• Believers demonstrate the genuineness of their faith by remaining faithful to Christ to the end.
FOCUS ATTENTION
What promises, positive or negative, from God’s Word would you consider to be especially fundamental to surviving and thriving as Christians?
• The promise of eternal life dooms unbelievers while at the same time forms the basis for everything we do as Christians.
• Understanding that God never leaves us nor forsakes His followers brings great comfort no matter what happens.
• Realizing that persecution will come our way prepares us to endure it.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE
2 TIMOTHY 3:12-13
Why would Paul think it’s important to warn us that Christians will face the threat of persecution?
• Identifying with Christ means we become like Him in every way, including attracting the contempt and enmity of the world.
• People who are unprepared for persecution may struggle to maintain biblical responses instead of personal, emotional responses.
• Instead of becoming less of a threat over time, persecutors have sharpened their skills and proven to be cunning adversaries for many Christians.

2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17
How does knowing the Bible help believers when they face persecution?
• Whether or not we have faithful family members who trained us in godliness early in our lives, every Christian can find a church that teaches the Word, learn from the faithful, and trust God’s Word to lead through deep waters.
• Equipped with the principles of Scripture, believers have the tools to discern truth from untruth and help others do the same.
• On a practical level, the by-product of knowing God’s Word, which takes the form of good works, also serves to nullify and counter persecution.

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-4
What do we glean from Paul’s charge to Timothy on preaching that can be applied in today’s church?
• When calling a pastor, churches should pay attention to the quality of messages he preaches, looking less at eloquence or delivery than content and adherence to the truths of God’s Word.
• Messages that convey God’s principles may be encouraging as well as challenging.
• Hard truths may evoke some discomfort, but the preacher who never challenges his listeners shortchanges them.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE
How do you want to finish out your life?
• We should be alert to the theme of the messages we hear from our local church and the church at large. Straying from traditional Christian doctrine is an indicator that we also stray from truth.

2 TIMOTHY 4:5-8
What did Paul value in a preacher that indicates whether one truly has a pastor’s heart?
• The call into ministry isn’t taken lightly but earnestly; it’s not a whimsical decision but an earnest, deeply-felt calling.
• Longevity means something because the persecution pastors face—and endure—becomes a testimony to their commitment to Christ and church leadership.
• An evangelistic spirit represents a heart to reach the lost and disciple Jesus’ followers.

What in Paul’s testimony about his resolve also would be important for the living to remember?
• If you’re not exhausting your life on behalf of Christ, you’re not fully alive.
• When we review our lives at death’s doors, we don’t want to go with regrets.
• If we forget that God has promised rewards for our service while on earth, then we’re less likely to be serious contenders for those blessings.

Personal Challenge: No one welcomes persecution, but being on the lookout for it helps us endure it when it comes. Meanwhile, you can prepare through absorbing God’s Word and standing on His promises when you’re tested. Surrounding yourself with encouragers who will support you during troubled times also gives you an enduring spirit. Meanwhile, look around to see if there are other Christians who need your support. Whether it’s a word of encouragement or holding up someone else’s arms, it can make a huge impact when it comes to staying strong.
DIG DEEPER

THE SCRIPTURES

Paul’s directive to Timothy about God’s Word sheds light on one of our most basic doctrinal convictions. The Baptist Faith and Message serves as the primary expression for Southern Baptists regarding what we believe. This important doctrinal statement binds us together as we serve the Lord by fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). What it says about the Scripture underscores Paul’s instruction to Timothy regarding the absolute need to embrace God’s Word.

The Baptist Faith and Message contains a series of articles on doctrinal topics that Southern Baptists embrace. In each article, you’ll find a somewhat brief statement regarding each topic along with a wealth of references from Scripture that address it.

The first article is about the Scripture. In the article, the Bible is affirmed to be “written by men divinely inspired and is God’s revelation of Himself to man.” Therefore, “all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy.” In addition, “all Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.” These excerpts from the article convey simply and clearly the absolute certainty of the priority of God’s Word in our churches and in our lives.

The priority of the Bible helps us when we think about the challenges facing us as followers of Jesus Christ. Like the Christians in Paul’s day, believers today talk with people whose views about spiritual matters fly in the face of biblical truths. Of course, they’re devoted to what they consider to be the truth, and many of them base their convictions on what they’ve read. Some of them have studied books they believe to be sacred. Others have read sources that they’ve deemed trustworthy. Still others base their convictions on what they’ve heard. Pivotal individuals in their lives have filled their minds and hearts with insights that have become trustworthy because of the credibility of the people who shared them.

In such a world Christians carry out the Great Commission to extend the borders of the kingdom of God by every person who receives Christ. Thanks to God’s Word, we can make an eternal difference in the lives of people. Under the leadership of God’s Spirit, His Word points people to His Son. Paul’s instruction to Timothy about Scripture provides an opportunity for believers in every generation to embrace the priority of the Bible in our walk with the Lord.

TITUS 1:1-5,10-16

1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness, 2 in the hope of eternal life that God, who cannot lie, promised before time began. 3 In his own time he has revealed his word in the preaching with which I was entrusted by the command of God our Savior: 4 To Titus, my true son in our common faith. Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. 5 The reason I left you in Crete was to set right what was left undone and, as I directed you, to appoint elders in every town. ... 10 For there are many rebellious people, full of empty talk and deception, especially those from the circumcision party. 11 It is necessary to silence them; they are ruining entire households by teaching what they shouldn’t in order to get money dishonestly. 12 One of their very own prophets said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” 13 This testimony is true. For this reason, rebuke them sharply, so that they may be sound in the faith 14 and may not pay attention to Jewish myths and the commands of people who reject the truth. 15 To the pure, everything is pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; in fact, both their mind and conscience are defiled. 16 They claim to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work.
1. SERVANT’S HEART (Titus 1:1-3)
   • Paul introduced himself as a servant of God, who was called by God to share the gospel and encourage the spiritual growth of believers.
   • God entrusted Paul’s work to him.

2. PURPOSEFUL ACTION (Titus 1:4-5)
   • Paul addressed this letter to Titus, a person he had led to Christ.
   • Paul left Titus on the island of Crete to help establish, organize, and strengthen churches.

3. OPPOSITION ADDRESSED (Titus 1:10-16)
   • Paul highlighted Judaizers who were disrupting the Cretan believers. He characterized them as talkers and deceivers, dedicated to myths.
   • Paul called them out, pointing to their behavior as evidence of their lack of credibility.
   • Note that Paul applied the quote about Cretans to the false prophets of Crete, not the Cretans in general.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS
Believers are accountable for rejecting false teachers and teachings.
• Believers have a gospel trust that must be shared with others.
• Believers are called on to help establish and strengthen local churches and church leaders.
• Believers must be willing to address false teachings head on.
DISCUSSION PLAN

FOCUS ATTENTION
What are the dangers of encountering false teaching or opposition to God’s Word for unbelievers? For believers?
• Unbelievers who get sucked into false teachings may never discover the truth.
• Immature Christians who aren’t grounded in the truth of Scripture may experience confusion and doubt.
• More mature Christians may respond with controlled but strong righteous indignation, which forces them to confront the liars.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE
TITUS 1:1-3
Considering the way Paul characterized himself in this passage, what would help shape a twenty-first century Christian’s identity in Christ if they adopted the same mind-set?
• Paul’s sense of servanthood was so deep he dubbed himself a slave; he no longer controlled his own life but spent it in service to God.
• Beyond being concerned with his own spiritual security, Paul built the faith of others through knowledge of God and His precepts.
• Paul unfailingly pointed people to Jesus as the hope of eternal life.

TITUS 1:4-5
What was Titus’ relationship to Paul? In what ways were they alike?
• Paul had led Titus to Christ.
• Titus followed in Paul’s footsteps by picking up where Paul left off, helping to establish and strengthen the church in Crete.

How did Titus’ relationship with Paul help him become another role model for contemporary Christians?
• By virtue of being called Paul’s true son, we know that Titus and Paul shared a faith that looked strikingly similar, not just to others outside of the family but to each other.
• Titus used the example Paul set for him to reach others for Christ.

TITUS 1:10-16
How would you characterize Paul’s advice to Titus?
• When referencing the opposition, Paul didn’t try to whitewash their rebellion but called them out for their defiance, greed, and dishonesty.
• Silencing the opposition with sharp rebukes protects others from being led astray.

Why would Christians, whom God generally calls to come down on the side of mercy and grace, need to employ such strong tactics to stand up for truth? How do we know when to go that far?
• Good-hearted people must not be naive but recognize that those who willfully rebel against God have seared consciences.
• Just as Christians’ good works testify to their godliness, those who reject the truth give evidence of their rebellion through their own works.
• Any false teaching requires correction, but those who intentionally contradict the Bible should be confronted with the truth for everyone’s sake.

What litmus test did Paul suggest to help us distinguish the enemy’s lies from truth?
• People may claim to speak truth, but their actions will give them away.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE
How can we uphold truth when we encounter opposition?
• Identity in Christ results not only in devotion to Him and His church but requires that we take strong stands as needed to defend the truth against opposition.
• Having the heart of a servant fully devoted to Christ will result in encouraging the spiritual growth of other believers.
• Looking out for others’ spiritual growth by working in and strengthening the church will encourage that spiritual growth.
• Standing up for truth against those who oppose it will protect others’ faith.

Personal Challenge: Just as you grow in knowledge and faith, you can practice standing up for truth. Unkindness is not required, just firm honesty. The next time you encounter direct opposition to God, ask Him to help you confront it. It could be a simple but well-worded line on social media or a sentence or two in a private conversation with a friend. Remember that an unconfronted rebel may lead others astray while a timely word may cut off that opportunity.
TWO SPRAY BOTTLES, WATER, AND BLEACH

Gather two empty spray bottles, a container of water, and bleach. Call attention to the two spray bottles and fill both bottles approximately two-thirds full. Add bleach to one and more water to the other. Make sure to remember which one is which.

Ask: If you were wanting to clean a bathroom, which bottle would you choose, and why? Notice that both bottles look the same from the outside but only one contains the cleaning product bleach. Compare the bottle containing only water to the teachings Paul directed Titus to oppose, portraying them as ineffective and destructive. State: If you cleaned the bathroom with water only, then you’re simply moving around the germs. The water is ineffective. Lead the group to read Titus 1:10-16, and then discuss how Paul highlighted the false teachings as ineffective.

Guide the group to identify ways of determining which bottle is which. Emphasize the responses that focus on testing the product or solution. Ask: If you knew your spouse or child was using an ineffective cleaner, would you alert him or her? Why? Explain that as believers, we must be willing to alert people to false teachings.

Close in prayer, asking that we would put forth the effort to recognize and reject false teaching.

FALSE TEACHERS

Paul recognized a serious problem in the Cretan churches, and he directed Titus to address it. The problem involved false teachers who were confusing believers and leading them away from wholesome walks with the Lord (Titus 1:10-16). The false teachers had been declaring that the gospel of Christ as Paul shared it fell short of what people needed to do to be saved. They insisted that salvation involved more than simply repenting and trusting Christ. For them, becoming a Christian meant becoming Jewish. Therefore, they argued that believers had to keep the Mosaic Law in order to be saved.

The churches in Crete weren’t alone. Other churches that Paul started or encountered in his missionary work had to contend with the same erroneous instruction. For instance, Paul had to deal with the problem in his Letters to the Romans (Rom. 2:17-29; 4:9-12), Corinthians (1 Cor. 7:18-19), Galatians (Gal. 2:3-12; 5:2-11), Colossians (Col. 2:11; 3:11), Ephesians (Eph. 2:11), and Philippians (Phil. 3:1-3). In each of these churches, false teachers contended that true Christians would want to honor the Jewish rite of circumcision.

False teachers have constantly tried to add or take away something from the simple gospel of Christ. Their heresies about Jesus cropped up and continued to take root throughout the history of the church. Not long into the church’s second century, certain so-called spiritual leaders in the church declared that Jesus wasn’t completely human. Such a claim ignored the straightforward message of Scripture. The account of His agony in the garden of Gethsemane alone verifies His humanity (Matt. 26:36-46). That’s only one claim about Jesus that false teachers made in the story of Christianity. They contradicted what the Scriptures clearly declared about the Lord. In so doing, they made the same sad mistake that the false teachers in Crete had made. They attempted to add something to the simple gospel message of salvation through repentance and faith in Christ alone.

The efforts to change the gospel message haven’t stopped. Christianity in America has more than a few names of heretical teachers who littered the pages of history. The damage done by their erroneous doctrines continues to distract and deceive God’s people. Each name and every cult verify the need for believers today to heed Paul’s warning to Titus centuries ago.

SESSION 12
LIVING WITH INTEGRITY

TITUS 2:1-15

1 But you are to **proclaim** things consistent with sound teaching. 2 Older men are to be self-controlled, worthy of respect, sensible, and **sound in faith**, love, and endurance. 3 In the same way, older women are to be **reverent** in behavior, not slanderers, not slaves to excessive drinking. They are to teach what is good, 4 so that they may **encourage the young women** to love their husbands and to love their children, 5 to be self-controlled, pure, **workers at home**, kind, and in **submission** to their husbands, so that God’s word will not be slandered. 6 In the same way, encourage the young men to be self-controlled 7 in everything. Make yourself an **example** of good works with integrity and dignity in your teaching. 8 Your message is to be sound **beyond reproach**, so that any opponent will be **ashamed**, because he doesn’t have anything bad to say about us. 9 Slaves are to submit to their masters in everything, and to be well-pleasing, not talking back 10 or stealing, but **demonstrating utter faithfulness**, so that they may **adorn** the teaching of God our Savior in everything. 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age, 13 while we wait for the **blessed hope**, the appearing of the glory of our great **God and Savior**, Jesus Christ. 14 He gave himself for us to **redeem** us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works. 15 Proclaim these things; encourage and rebuke with all authority. Let no one **disregard** you.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A “Speak up for” (TLB); “promote” (NLT)
B Well-grounded in trusting the Lord
C “Live in a way that honors God” (NLT)
D A picture of biblical mentoring—a cross-generational ministry of connecting with and learning from those who have more life experience
E Wives who make their homes a priority, who “keep a good house” (The Message)
F A wife “who puts her own husband first” (CEV)
G A life lived as a “model” (ESV) or “pattern” (NKJV) for other believers to follow
H So well-grounded and prepared that you “cannot be criticized” (GNT) or “condemned” (NIV)
I Will suffer a loss of respect by those who were against them
J “Completely honest and trustworthy” (CEV); “always good and faithful” (GNT)
K Cast an “attractive” (NIV) light on
L Our hope in the coming of the Lord enables us to wait on His timing
M This title links God with Christ, as do passages like John 20:28; Romans 9:5; and 2 Peter 1:1
N Paul used the term to describe how Christ rescued us from sin (Rom. 6:17-23; 1 Tim. 2:6)
O “Look down on” (GNT); “earn everyone’s respect” (CEV); “disregard what you say” (NLT)
1. SPOKEN (Titus 2:1)
   • Paul challenged Titus to speak the truth.

2. ACTED (Titus 2:2-10)
   • Paul gave Titus directions to be delivered to older men, older women, young women, young men, and slaves.
   • The actions he gave to each group identified practical ways of demonstrating godliness in their current life stations.
   • Paul wasn’t affirming slavery but rather addressing those who were slaves and how they were to conduct themselves toward their masters.

3. EMPOWERED (Titus 2:11-14)
   • Paul pointed to the gospel as motivation for living a godly life.
   • A godly life can’t be lived apart from the gospel.
   • Affirm that everyone is offered salvation, but salvation is only granted to those who accept Christ.
   • The believer’s “blessed hope” is Christ’s return.

4. AUTHORITY (Titus 2:15)
   • Paul directed Titus to act with authority, not allowing any believer to disregard his message.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

Believers are to live so that they bring honor to Jesus.
• Believers are to testify in word to the truth of the gospel.
• Believers are to demonstrate godliness in their lives regardless of their age or stations in life.
• Believers can live godly lives through the power of the gospel.
• Believers are to teach godliness boldly in the authority of Jesus.
DISCUSSION PLAN

FOCUS ATTENTION
What standards of integrity do employers expect their employees to uphold as representatives of the company?

- Most employers seek integrity in word and deed from their employees, a standard God expects from His followers.
- Successful employees don’t work just to advance their own agenda but empower others to the benefit of the entire organization.
- Companies expect their employees to exercise the authority that has been assigned to them; likewise, Christians serve under the authority God has given them.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE
TITUS 2:1
What might keep a person from speaking for the truth?

- Christians should speak up as appropriate. Sharing insight and information into the meaning of life through Jesus Christ requires voluntarily communicating with other believers and the world.
- Christians must speak truth. What we say must match up with what the Bible teaches.

TITUS 2:2-10
What significant opportunities and pitfalls did Paul identify that may interfere with our ability to live with spiritual integrity?

- Paul provided directives on how to act at every stage of life.
- Older men, by virtue of their age and accompanying life, should be able to amass a higher level of respect through their actions that will leave positive impressions on the younger.
- Instead of resorting to empty activities like gossip, older women have the unique opportunity to mentor in godly marriages and motherhood.
- The young men share the message of living with integrity under the control of the Holy Spirit.

How would you summarize what Paul was teaching us in verses 9-10?

- Paul’s advice shouldn’t be considered as affirmation of slavery but as directions for the Christian who hopes to share the gospel with those in authority.
- Submission in act, speech, and devotion would more likely lead to reflecting a positive gospel message than rebellion.
- While our culture rejects slavery and the idea that one person can own another, we can apply these same principles as we serve our employers faithfully in our workplaces.

TITUS 2:11-14
What motivation for living a life that honors Christ could we borrow from Paul and Titus?

- Receiving God’s grace is life-changing with the motivation not only to move us but keep us going in a new direction.
- Living with the expectancy of Christ’s return encourages us to stay faithful.
- Remembering the sacrifice that Jesus made for our redemption provides the inspiration to replicate His example with selfless living.

TITUS 2:15
If our message is going to be received, what must we do to be taken seriously?

- If our speech and actions match up with the message, we’ll appear to be authentic, and our message can’t be discounted.
- We can speak God’s message with confidence both when we encourage and correct because we have the authority as a follower of God.
- Our message is so important that it demands a hearing that we should insist on.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE
Do you live with the spiritual integrity required to share the gospel message and be heard?

- Living up to the gospel requires us to embrace a personal set of ethics that are carefully outlined in the Scriptures and impressed upon us by the Holy Spirit in collaboration with our own consciences.
- Testifying to the truth of the gospel demonstrates our verbal commitment to spiritual integrity.
- Maintaining our spiritual integrity is a lifelong in-season and out-of-season commitment.
- God’s standards are so high that we can’t reach them in our own strength, but we’ve been empowered by grace.
- Striving for spiritual integrity shouldn’t be just a personal goal; on the authority of Christ we compel others to do so as well.

Personal Challenge: Apply the life stage that most closely applies to determine whether you’re living up to those standards. In addition, decide where the characteristics Paul suggested for servitude apply to you (at home, in the workplace, etc.). Finally, consider how you can share the gospel message with authority at your current stage of life.
A GLOVE

Before the session, select a close-fitting glove to bring and wear. If possible, choose a glove that’s attractive rather than just functional.

Put the glove on your hand and hold it up in front of the group. Ask: Why do we wear gloves? Lead the group in various responses (to protect the skin, for warmth, as an accessory, etc.).

Say: Wearing this glove reminds me of my need to clothe myself with spiritual integrity. When spiritual integrity fits like a glove, it gives me all the benefits that a glove provides my hand. First, spiritual integrity protects me from sin. Living by a personal code of conduct helps me to stay further away from certain kinds of sin that would damage me spiritually. Second, I want to be someone who lives with integrity. I can’t take sinful pride in it, but it makes me feel good about myself. Third, just as others notice how this glove looks on my hand and maybe find it attractive, others take note of my spiritual integrity, too. My hope is that it’s winsome enough that they want to try it on.

Segue into a discussion of what spiritual integrity looks like according to Paul’s instructions to Titus and why it’s so important as we communicate the gospel. Point out that by accepting Christ, believers agree to a code of conduct that’s outlined not only in Titus but throughout Scripture. Be sure to connect speech and action with authenticity and motivation with empowerment. Close by reading Titus 2:11-14 as a prayer over the group.

DIG DEEPER

EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Paul’s instruction to Titus about teaching well invites Christians to pay close attention to the teaching ministry in the church. His urgency about making sure we teach God’s ways well beckons us to consider the important matters of teaching substance and style. Paul gave attention to both components of effective teaching in this portion of his Letter to Titus. Wise Bible teachers give serious consideration to both components as we teach God’s people how to walk in Him.

Of course, the substance of our instruction matters most. It’s the “what” of the church’s teaching ministry. Notice Paul’s insistence on making sure our instruction remains consistent with sound doctrine (Titus 2:1). When we grasp Paul’s firm assertion that our instruction needs to be based on dependable truth, we appreciate God’s Word even more. We regard the Bible as the foundation for what we teach, and we affirm that Scripture provides what’s necessary for instruction that makes a difference in our lives.

God’s Word shows us how to love Him and to express it in our love for others through Christ Jesus, who transforms us from the inside out. As a result, the relationships we have with people at home and at work are stronger and deeper (vv. 2-6). When we get the “what” of our instruction correct, we’re on solid ground and on a clear path to helping believers grow in Him.

But what about the other component? Do we need to give attention to the style of our instruction? Answering that questions requires us to define style correctly. It’s a word we generally associate with the way we dress. But teaching styles include much more than mere decoration or ornamentation. Style has to do with how teachers share the content—or the what of the teaching moment.

Paul addressed style as he guided Titus to be an effective teacher. He directed Titus to embody what he taught. That’s how people would be persuaded to take his instruction seriously (v. 7). Then he went on to tell Titus to present his instruction in a compelling, authoritative manner. That’s how people would be unable to ignore him (vv. 8,15).

Teachers do well to take Paul’s advice regarding the what and how of effective teaching. What we say matters most, but how we say it makes a monumental difference in the way people listen to us.
SESSION 13
LIVING TO DO

TITUS 3:1-11

1 Remind them to submit to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, no one, to avoid fighting, and to be kind, always showing gentleness to all people. For we too were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, he saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy—through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. He poured out his Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior so that, having been justified by his grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life. This saying is trustworthy. I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed God might be careful to devote themselves to good works. These are good and profitable for everyone. But avoid foolish debates, genealogies, quarrels, and disputes about the law, because they are unprofitable and worthless. Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning. For you know that such a person has gone astray and is sinning; he is self-condemned.
1. GOOD DEEDS (Titus 3:1-2)
   - Paul directed Titus to remind the Cretan believers to be ready to do good works, placing others above themselves.

2. BASED ON HIS MERCY (Titus 3:3-7)
   - Paul outlined the contrast between the believer before and after conversion.
   - He emphasized that salvation isn’t based on works but on God’s mercy received through faith in Jesus.

3. DONE ON PURPOSE (Titus 3:8-11)
   - Paul explained that good works, not debates and arguments, should characterize the believer’s behavior.
   - The person who focuses on doing good works for God’s honor won’t have time to get involved in wasteful debates and arguments.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS
Believers should look for opportunities to do good works as acts of worship.
- Believers demonstrate their faith through godly actions.
- Salvation offered through faith in Christ moves believers to good works.
- By avoiding useless debates, believers can concentrate on honoring God through doing good works.
FOCUS ATTENTION
When you think of good works at home, your church, or your community, what comes to mind?
• Many people think of volunteerism or service with a non-profit or community organization as an example of a good work.
• Some consider financial generosity as another way to support such organizations and an extension of or substitute for volunteerism.
• Our personal efforts to minister to others on our own and without the endorsement of an organization also serve as powerful examples of good works to our family and friends.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE
TITUS 3:1-2
How does Paul’s description of good works broaden the definition beyond our initial thoughts?
• A good work is something we should welcome and actively seek to perform whenever the opportunity comes our way.
• Good works put the needs of others above our own; they are often accomplished instead of self-care.
• By sandwiching a direction to engage in good works between obeying authorities, avoiding the kind of behavior that may harm others, and encouraging those that help them, Paul categorized good works as ways to deftly elevate faith through godly actions.

TITUS 3:3-7
Before we came to saving faith in Christ, what about our unregenerated selves would make good works next to impossible?
• Being consumed with the self-interest common to people in their natural, sinful states would leave little time for good works.
• Our lack of concern or care for others would diminish any desire to accomplish good works.
• If good works are the natural by-product of a life of faith, the by-product of a faithless life would be the opposite.

Why would Paul, after lauding good works, then take pains to diminish their importance?
• The understanding that we’re saved through grace, not works, is a basic tenet of Christianity and an important distinction from other religions.
• Jesus Christ’s atoning death on the cross and His resurrection accomplished the work of salvation, not our own efforts.
• Because Jesus prompts the good works we accomplish, the credit for them rightfully belongs to Him; He is the motivator.

TITUS 3:8-11
After first lauding then minimizing good works, Paul returned to recommending them. Why? What’s in it for the believer?
• Doing good works benefits the doer as well as the beneficiary by reinforcing a sense of purpose.
• Being focused and engaged in good works prevents us from wasting our time on other pointless or unprofitable activities.

How does a devotion to faithfully representing Christ through our works minimize being involved in dishonorable actions?
• In devoting ourselves to good works, we remove ourselves from the potential to be tripped up by sins.
• We also do others a favor when we respond to those who refuse to devote themselves to good works and end up stirring up trouble instead. We can first warn them and then reject their behaviors.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE
What place should good works have in a Christian’s life?
• God’s mercy to us should manifest itself in good works that benefit others.
• Being intentional about producing good works entails cultivating opportunities to show that “we love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).
• Good works manifest as deeds that we do to serve others.
• Serving others is a way to serve God. Whatever we do for the least we do for Him (Matt. 25:40).
• Being intentional in our good works means we’ll better share Christ’s love and protect ourselves from other activities that wouldn’t be spiritually profitable.

Personal Challenge: List Christ-honoring actions you have taken over the past week. Are you pleased with the list? While it’s important to spring into action when the opportunity for good works appear, being intentional or strategic may produce a harvest of good works. Plan the good works you’ll do in the week ahead. Don’t be overly ambitious; just look at the needs around you, and decide if there’s any way to help.
A GARDEN SPADE, GLOVES, A FLOWER POT, SOIL, AND SEEDS

Before the session gather garden tools to plant flower seeds, including a small spade, gloves, flower pot with soil, and seeds. During the session, don the gloves and show the group the rest of the gardening items. Hold up the packet of seeds and explain: These seeds represent the good works we do in life because once planted, they flower, creating beauty and refreshing those who see them.

As the group watches, add potting soil to the flower pot, dig in the soil, and plant the seeds. Say: We call them good works because they require effort. I hope you noticed the work I’ve already put into planting these flowers, and if we’re going to see a flowering plant, it’s not over. Note that Christians have to make the effort to gather the seeds of good works, dig in the dirt, plant the seeds, and may even become the ones responsible for tending the plants and making sure they have sunshine and water.

Conclude by identifying the kind of flower you just planted and when you expect the plant to grow and flower. Gift the plant to someone in the group or agree together who in the church the group would like to see take it home. Remind them that good works can be simple ones, like this modest gift, or may require much more time and effort, but they all take root in the mercy God has shown us and bloom in our care for others.

CLOTHED IN HUMILITY

Paul encouraged Titus to teach believers the value of doing good works so people could see Christ in them (Titus 3:1-2). In the process, he brought up the need for a sharp memory. Reasonably, the Christians in Crete could reach the point when they would grow tired of doing what’s good. When people persecuted them, misunderstood their efforts, or ignored what they were doing, they could find themselves wanting to give up on doing anything that would point people to Christ. Therefore, they would be able to keep on doing things that would be good only if they remembered well. Remembering how God loved them enough to save them through Christ would keep them on task. He saved them because of His love, not because of anything they did to earn their salvation (v. 3-7). Remembering would enable them to get off their high horses of selfish pride and press on with humble service.

An awareness of humility reinforces the value of remembering that Christ saved us, and we didn’t save ourselves. In an article about being humble that appeared in a recent issue of Biblical Illustrator, attention was given to the biblical framework for understanding humility. In the days of the Old Testament, humility emerged from poverty. Poor people practiced humility when they came into the presence of individuals who were wealthy. They bowed in humble submission in the awareness that they had nothing. Accordingly, kings expected subjects in their kingdoms to bow before them in humility. Refusing to express humility in the presence of the king was a sure sign of disrespect and perhaps even rebellion.

The picture of humility painted in the Bible helped God’s people to approach Him with submissive, willing hearts. He helped them to see that He resisted people filled with selfish pride. However, He was gracious to a person saturated with sincere humility (Prov. 3:34). In the New Testament, church leaders brought up the need for believers to practice humility in their walks with the Lord (Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5). Jesus serves as our stellar model of humility (Phil. 2:5-8).

Remembering that we’re saved because of what Christ did for us helps us remain humble. That kind of humility enables us to keep on serving Him by doing whatever is good for His glory.

4 Ways To Honor Church Leaders

How are we to treat our church leaders? The biblical teaching is clear: we are to honor them.

Honor is an internal attitude of respect. It is expressed by appropriate actions; otherwise, it’s only lip service. Children show honor to their parents by obeying them. We honor God by doing the things that please Him. What, then, are some appropriate actions we should take to honor our church leaders?

1. SUPPORT THEM.

“The elders who are good leaders are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says: Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain, and the worker is worthy of his wage” (1 Tim. 5:17-18).

Financial support was at least a part of the “double honor” to which Paul referred.
The Greek word translated “honor” is the same word used in 1 Timothy 5:3, where it refers to material support. Other passages where the word means “pay” include Matthew 27:6 (“silver”); Acts 4:34 (“proceeds”); and 1 Corinthians 6:20 (“price”). We must not miss the fact that the same Greek word translated “honor” also means “worth,” “price,” and “compensation.”

We honor our church leaders who faithfully serve the church by providing proper compensation. Failure to do so implies a lack of honor.

2. LOVE THEM.

“Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to give recognition to those who labor among you and lead you in the Lord and admonish you, and to regard them very highly in love because of their work” (1 Thess. 5:12-13).

The measure of our love for our leaders is Christ’s undeserving love for us (John 13:34). The description of the kind of love our leaders need is 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

I’ll mention one specific way to love your pastor: protect him. Paul counseled Timothy, “Don’t accept an accusation against an elder unless it is supported by two or three witnesses” (1 Tim. 5:19). Church leaders are easy targets of unrealistic expectations. We honor them and love them by protecting them from false accusations and criticisms.

3. PRAY FOR THEM.

“Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, through our Lord Jesus Christ and through the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in fervent prayers to God on my behalf” (Rom. 15:30).

Paul not only appealed to the church at Rome to pray for him, he asked them to pray specifically:

- that he would be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea (v. 31);
- that the offering from Gentile believers would be received by the Jerusalem church (v. 31);
- that, God willing, he would be able to come to Rome (v. 32).

Church leaders need specific prayer that goes beyond the generic “bless our pastor.” Here are ten very specific and biblical ways you can pray for your pastor:

- Pray that his first love will be Jesus (John 21:15-17).
- Pray he will keep his marriage and family a priority; they are his first ministry (Eph. 5:25; 1 Tim. 3:4).
• Pray he will have the mindset that true success in ministry is measured by faithfulness to God—nothing more, nothing less (1 Cor. 4:2).
• Pray for his purity so he will not fall into temptation (Ps. 24:3-4).
• Pray he will continually seek God’s direction for your church (Ex. 33:13-15; Ps. 32:8; Jas. 1:5).
• Pray he will have boldness to speak the truth and grace to speak it with humility (Acts 20:18-21; Eph. 6:19).
• Pray he will teach sound doctrine (2 Tim. 2:15; Titus 1:9; 2:1).
• Pray he will discern what is most important and be guarded against the tyranny of the urgent (Acts 6:1-4).
• Pray God will protect him from negative criticism, false expectations, and gossip, and that he will have a soft heart in the face of abusive and mean-spirited people (Prov. 26:4).
• Pray he will receive the rest that he needs (Luke 5:15-16).

4. FOLLOW THEM.

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, since they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17).

Scripture teaches the accountability of leaders to lead well. They lead under God’s leadership and are ultimately accountable to Him. Scripture also teaches the responsibility of church members to obey and submit to their leaders. This is not blind obedience. Insofar as leaders teach in accordance with God’s Word, we are to “obey … [and] submit to them.”

How will you honor your church leaders this week?

Mike Livingstone works at LifeWay Christian Resources as content editor for Explore the Bible materials.
## COMING NEXT QUARTER

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<td>Session 8</td>
<td>Walking Forward</td>
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<td>Walking to Battle</td>
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