

THE CHURCH:

Irrelevant



Dangerous



or Necessary?



a
series
in
1
&
2
Timothy

Passage Schedule	3
Series Introduction	4
Series Help	6
Week 5	8
Week 6	13
Week 7	17
Week 8	22
Week 9	28
Week 10	33
Week 11	39
Additional Resources	43

Passage Schedule

Week 1	1 Tim. 1:1-2
Week 2	1 Tim. 1:3-11
Week 3	1 Tim. 1:12-17
Week 4	1 Tim. 1:18-20
Week 5	1 Tim. 2:1-4
Week 6	1 Tim. 2:5-7
Week 7	1 Tim. 2:8-10
Week 8	1 Tim. 2:11-15
Week 9	1 Tim. 3:1-7
Week 10	1 Tim. 3:8-13
Week 11	1 Tim. 3:14-15

ADVENT BEGINS

11/27/2022	1 Tim. 3:16 - Manifested
12/4/2022	1 Tim. 3:16 - Vindicated
12/11/2022	1 Tim. 3:16 - Seen
12/18/2022	1 Tim. 3:16 - Proclaimed
12/24/2022	1 Tim. 3:16 - Believed & Taken

Series Introduction

With each passing day we are given more bad news in our complex and chaotic world. Information that used to take weeks or months to reach us is available in an instant, and we barely have time to catch our breath before we're alerted again. Our attention is diverted, drawn, sold, and bought on a global scale, and we're overwhelmed not just by what's out there in the external world but by our response to it all internally.

So where does the church fit in this modern maze?

Does the church stand shrinking in the shadow of more important, dynamic institutions and initiatives? Is the church a threat to human flourishing like some sort of noxious weed too rooted to be fully pulled and thrown away? Or is the church, with all of its blemishes, shortfalls, and failures, the necessary and beautiful epicenter of God's activity in the world?

Nearly 2,000 years ago, a regular man on an irregular mission wrote two letters describing the church as "the household of God", "the church of the living God", and "a pillar and buttress of the truth". That man was the Apostle Paul, and his

letters to Timothy stand today as two glorious explorations of the goodness and necessity of the church. Far from being a political institution, special building, or collective of morally-confused activists, the church is God's family, those whom God has saved from sin and death and sent out to deliver the best news of all time.

As we study 1 and 2 Timothy, our prayer is that God will awaken you to the beauty and necessity of His family, the church, and that the gospel will motivate you to help this family be as helpful, healthy, and holy as God desires, because the church is the irreplaceable focus of and vehicle for God's redemption. The church is where God gathers His beloved children to love, nurture, instruct, discipline, and give refuge. The church is where the true gospel is held high, protected, and passed on. In the church, we find those whom the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit redeemed from sin and death: undeserving sinners who are made new and adopted as God's kids.

So to a weary and disillusioned world, God gives the church, and it is Jesus - God in the flesh, who is the very foundation of that gift. To disregard the church, then, is to disregard the only hope any of us have.

Series Help

1 & 2 Timothy are two letters sent by the Apostle Paul to his protege Timothy, a young church leader assigned to help the church in Ephesus grow in health and holiness.

These letters were meant to be read to the entire church because they contain God's cross-cultural instructions related to the structure, leadership, and organization of the church, which is God's household.

The art contains three main stamp images that each represent a different assessment of the church in our culture: irrelevant, dangerous, or necessary.

IRRELEVANT



The image of a floppy disk stands as a representative of something that is considered irrelevant.

The stamp in the upper left says “Ephesus”, representing the location of the churches Timothy helped.

“67” in the lower left represents a date suggested by some scholars for the writing of 2 Timothy. 67 AD is roughly 30 years after Jesus’ resurrection.

DANGEROUS



The imagery here is of a woman wearing a vintage gas mask, standing in front of a collage of barbed wire.

This communicates the danger some see in what the Bible teaches about leadership roles, sexuality, and holiness in general.

“1/2” represents 1 & 2 Timothy while the “Rome Prison Mail” stamp represents the fact that Paul wrote 2 Timothy from a Roman prison just prior to his execution.

NECESSARY



The imagery here is of vibrant fruit and botanicals, set against a backdrop of water and sun, both of which are necessary for all humans.

In the same way, the church is a necessity because it is God’s chosen vehicle for redemption.

“33” represents the traditional year of Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, and the continuing of the mission of the church after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Week 5

PRAYER THAT PLEASES GOD

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

SUMMARY

The church is not only the community where the true gospel is taught, it's where prayers are offered to God.

Here Paul begins his authoritative instructions to the early Christian church - which apply to us today - with the practical side of discipleship. What's the priority for Paul? Prayer. And we learn at least three biblical motivations for prayer: (1) it pleases God our Savior, (2) it's a response to God's amazing character, and (3) it provides the potential for peace, which opens more opportunities for evangelism.

We also get a peak into God's heart: He wants *all kinds* of people to know Him as Savior and Father simply because He loves them.

If we aren't a praying church, the answer isn't looking *in* for answers or *out* for culture's rebuke, but up to God our Savior.

GROUP INTRO

What would you say is your biggest struggle with prayer?

TEXT

1. Take some time to observe the verses. What stands out to you? Is there anything confusing or enlightening?

Leader help: We want to work out our "observation muscles" - sometimes we are in such a hurry with the Bible that we rush over what it says and jump to what we think it means. Observation is just as important as interpretation.

2. Here are simple definitions for the prayer the terms Paul uses in verse 1:

Supplications: prayer for specific needs

Prayers: general prayers to God, including praise

Intercessions: bold prayers for others

Thanksgivings: gratitude expressed to God

What is the *motivation* for these prayers and what is the possible *outcome* of these prayers?

Leader help: Motivation: praying pleases God, who is our gracious, loving Savior.

Outcome: potentially a peaceful and quiet life, meaning a life lived under the government's protection, which gives opportunities to peacefully proclaim the gospel.

3. Why is prayer so crucial for the church in Timothy's time and in our own time?

Leader help: Only the gospel can save from God's justice, and we want to be able to proclaim it, just as the church in Timothy's time wanted. And the church is all about spiritual work, which isn't accomplished by our natural talents or strengths, but through dependent, God-trusting prayer. This is how God is glorified - by using weak, foolish people to accomplish His eternal purposes.

4. If God desires "all people to be saved", why isn't every single person saved?

Leader help: the simplest answer is that the word "all" in this passage doesn't mean "every single person" but instead means "all kinds" or "all types". In other words, God wants to save all kinds of people. This is why Jesus, after He resurrected from the dead, told His disciples to make more disciples of "all nations". Only by faith alone in Jesus alone is someone saved from the judgment of God (see Matt. 1:21; John 10:11; Eph. 5:25).

The clearest indicator that this is what Paul means is his use of the word in verse 1. He clearly doesn't mean that we must pray for every single person on the planet. This also helps us make sense of how Paul uses the word in verse 6 - Jesus is not every single person's ransom, but He is the ransom for all kinds of people who have trusted in Him.

This is how the word is also used in other New Testament passages (see Matt. 2:3; Luke 21:38; Acts 2:14).

APPLICATION

1. One author writes this about verse 2: *"If prayer for political rulers could be urged when an emperor as cruel as Nero was on the throne, it's difficult to imagine a scenario in which believers are exempt from this responsibility."*¹

What stands in the way of you praying for governing leaders with whom you disagree? Since prayer for leaders please God, and God loves them, how will you specifically pray for leaders this week?

2. Of the four types of prayers Paul mentions, which do you most often use? What are some ways we can broaden how we pray and what we pray about in group?

Leader help: One of the best ways to broaden and enrich prayer is to pray the Bible. Author Donald Whitney writes:

"Turn the words of Scripture into the words of your prayers. The easiest places to do this are the Psalms and the New Testament letters.

*So if you were to pray through Psalm 23, you'd read the first line—'The Lord is my shepherd'—and pray something like, 'Thank You, Lord, that You are my Shepherd. You are a good shepherd. Please shepherd my family; cause them to love You as their Shepherd as I love You as my Shepherd.'"*²

¹ Andreas Kostenberger, Commentary on 1-2 Timothy & Titus, page 93.

² Donald Whitney, Cultivating Practical Godliness, www.thegospelcoalition.org

3. How do you feel knowing God *wanted* you in His family, even when you were at your worst? (see Rom. 5:6-8)

PRAYER

As a healthy challenge, gently encourage everyone to pray aloud this week, and to commit to praying for at least one government official during the week.

Pray the four types of prayers together:

Supplications: prayer for specific needs

Prayers: general prayers to God, including praise

Intercessions: bold prayers for others

Thanksgivings: gratitude expressed to God

Week 6

ONE GOD, ONE MEDIATOR

1 TIMOTHY 2:5-7

SUMMARY

The influence of religious pluralism - the idea that there are many religious paths to God - is one reason some view the church as dangerous. After all, the Bible contains passages like this:

"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus..."

Doesn't this make Christians narrow-minded? Intolerant? Arrogant? Simply put: no. Because it's God who claims to be the *only* God:

"I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides Me there is no God..." (Isa. 45:5).

And it's Jesus who claims to be the *only* way to God:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

The church's teaching that Jesus is the only way to God arises from what God says. This isn't dangerous news, this is good news.

GROUP INTRO

This week's passage describes Jesus as our Mediator - the one who stands between God and sinners. Have you ever had someone stand up for you or speak up on your behalf? How did this impact you?

TEXT

1. How do verses 5-7 relate to Paul's instructions starting in 1 Timothy 2:1?

Leader help: One way God works in the world is through the prayers of His people, so when God's people pray for the salvation of others, God may respond to save. The only way to be saved from God's judgment and our sin is through faith in the one Mediator, Jesus Christ.

2. What other Bible passages support the claim that there is "one God" and only one mediator between God and humans?

Leader help: See Isaiah 45:5-6; Matt. 11:27; and John 14:6 for examples.

3. What does Jesus's willingness and ability to be the mediator tell us about His heart?

Leader help: His willingness reveals His stunning love for us, not because of who we are, but because of who He is - He didn't wait for us to be lovable, He loved us at our worst. His ability reveals that He's more than a teacher and prophet, but is actually God in the flesh.

4. Why is Jesus called our mediator? What has He done and what does He do now that makes Him a mediator?

Leader help: Being truly human, Jesus fulfilled the obligations and demands of God's holy will (as revealed in the Law). Being truly God, Jesus is able to bear God's wrath in the place of His people. This work is how Jesus "mediates" between God and humanity - He is permanently and joyfully the one who lived in our place and died the death we deserve.

5. Last week we saw how the word translated "all" in verse 6 means "all kinds of people."

Since Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for all kinds of people, what should Christian churches be known for?

Leader help: We should be a community that embraces ethnic, economic, and age diversity. We should be hospitable and welcoming, just as God has been to us. We should also be known as sacrificially loving, representing our Savior. Where we have failed in these areas, we must be honest and repentant.

APPLICATION

1. Some people in our culture think that if your faith is sincere, even if it's not faith in Jesus, God will accept you. What's the problem with this? How can the church help unbelievers know why we trust in Jesus alone for salvation?
2. What are some implications of Paul's statement that there is only one God and one mediator?
Leader help: One implication is that every other faith or religion aside from Christianity is unable to provide reconciliation with the true God. Another implication is that hope is only found where the true gospel is offered.
3. Since Paul was "appointed", his teaching carries the authority of Jesus Himself. So far in 1 Timothy, what of Paul's teaching has confused you, troubled you, or encouraged you? Why?
4. If you're a Christian, when in your life do you most need the reminder that Jesus is your mediator (when you sin, when you're suffering, etc.)? If you're not a Christian, what do you think about the fact that Jesus is called a mediator?

PRAYER

Spend your prayer time praising God.

Week 7

HOLY HOW TO'S

1 TIMOTHY 2:8-11

SUMMARY

The good news of Jesus changes everything. In our study we've seen that God is our savior, that God saves sinners, that he gives us grace, and that through Jesus our sins are paid for and we are the people of God. Paul writes to Timothy because the influence of bad teachers and bad doctrine threatened the vitality of the church by promoting bad practices and beliefs. Paul's answer to this is a return to the redemptive work of the gospel.

In Jesus, every human relationship is redeemed and reflects the glory of God, especially among His people. And this includes our sexuality. As God redeems men and women, He invites men and women to honor him in the church and our culture. Today we look at how men and women are called to honor God according to their sex. Next week, we will look at how God calls the sexes to relate to each other in the church.

GROUP INTRO

Share an evidence of grace, or an encouragement, about the person sitting on your left or right. You can only share an encouragement about the person to the side of you and not both sides.

TEXT

1. What stands out to you in this text?
2. Verse 8 says "I desire then", indicating that it's continuing a previous thought. Re-read verses 1-7. How does it change the way you read this verse? What is at stake for the church to not live these gospel-formed practices?
3. What are other physical postures of prayer and worship that we see in the Bible?
4. What are Good Works?
5. Compare verse 10 with Proverbs 31:30-31. How does this help us know what verse 10 is saying? What it's not saying?

Read out-loud before continuing: While both sexes can struggle with quarreling and modesty, these verses are addressed to men and women respectively. Some of the following questions are also addressed specifically to men and to women. If you are male, focus on the questions for men. If you are female, the questions for ladies.

God's words given to us here were meant to draw us to repentance and joyful obedience, not for us to use these verses against our brothers and sisters in Christ. So use these questions to talk about your **own** obedience to Christ in these matters, not as a measuring stick or to accuse each other. In co-ed groups, the men and women will be the primary drivers in questions applied to their sex.

APPLICATION

1. When you pray or worship, do you move your body into postures of prayer and worship like hand raising or kneeling? How can bodily postures have a positive or negative effect on your worship?
2. Instead of focusing on God in prayer and worship, men in Timothy's church were "angry and quarreling". What does this make you think of?

3. Men: How have frustrations of any shape or form kept you from worshipping your savior, or praying for others? Are there practices you are guilty of that distract others from worship?

Examples: Are you so theologically specific on an issue that you can't build bridges? Are you 'righteously' nursing a wound you received from someone? Are you unable to see beyond the political viewpoint of a fellow believer or a neighbor who God wants to save? Do you dislike things in the worship gathering and disengage?

4. Men: How does the gospel of verses 1:12-17 and 2:5-7 relieve your need to be right and invite you to worship?

5. Women: How has your faith shaped your view of your outward appearance? Knowing that your status as God's beloved daughter is yours forever, is there anything you personally would change about your dress or how you view yourself?

6. Women: How does the gospel of verses 1:12-17 and 2:5-7 set you free from the need to dress to please or appease others?

PRAYER

Split into men's and women's prayer. Bring up areas that your worship and practice in the church has not been aligned with the gospel, and pray for each other, applying the gospel to each other in turn.



Week 8

REDEEMING EDEN

1 TIMOTHY 2:11-15

COMMENTARY

In reading this passage, three views emerge. The first is to dismiss this passage as being backwards, and that our view has evolved beyond scripture. There are two major problems with this as Christians. The first is that we are approaching a book that has lasted over 2000 years and saying that our culture has vanquished it, and will outlast it. The second is that this kind of way of reading scripture is a slippery slope. If we have evolved beyond Paul's words, should we also ignore his writings when he said that male and female are equal in Jesus Christ? Or how Paul and Jesus equipped women to lead and encouraged loving relationships between men and women? Or Paul's teachings on our hope in the resurrection and the afterlife? We cannot follow scripture as God-breathed and pick and choose the passages that we want. If this is the word of God, we submit to all of it.

The second view is a localized reading of the passage. This method says that the text is 100% specific to the problem in Ephesus, and that it does not speak into the roles of men and women in the church. Many Jesus loving disciples hold to this view, and it has merit that there was a problem in Ephesus that Paul wanted Timothy to deal with. But treating it only as a local problem ignores that Paul goes into an explanation of men and women from creation. It also makes the rest of the book confusing. Chapter 2 immediately goes into the qualifications for elders in chapter 3. Not every man in Timothy's church had a right to speak in the church, but only those who were called and tested.

The final view is to see Paul addressing a local issue with a universal truth. This is the perspective of Living Stones, and it is shared by many Christians of all denominations. Paul is not teaching that women cannot lead or instruct, but that called, qualified men were not leading the church, and that this went against God's design. In marriage the husband and wife are instructed to follow Christ, who redeems the role given to them as male and female. Christ also redeems their roles in the church and calls men and women to follow Him.

This calling included redeeming the man's role to as a servant-leader who gives his life for the flock.

GROUP INTRO

Share a memory of someone who disciplined you, or led you, in the Christian faith. What was something they did or said that impacted you?

TEXT

1. What stands out to you in this text?
2. Read a few different translations of verse 11. What differences do you notice?

From the New English Translation Notes: Verse 11 gives a positive statement (that is to say, that a woman should learn). This was a radical and liberating departure from the Jewish view that women were not to learn the law.

3. When you look at the rest of chapter 2, what else, and who else, was causing problems during public worship in this church? How did that different group disrupt the gatherings, and how are the women doing it here?

The men of verse 8 were quarrelling. Here it appears that the women were disrupting gatherings by talking over the study of scripture.

4. Read Genesis 3 as a group. How did human relationships go awry when sin entered the world? Where do you see glimpses of the gospel?
5. Read Colossians 3:10. If Jesus is redeeming our roles as male and female, what does that look like?

APPLICATION

1. This passage opens up that the women “should” or “must” learn. For all of us in this group, how is your study of scripture right now? What are you learning about God in scripture?
2. It is not unusual to read this and to struggle with it’s content. All of us, male and female, are called to submit to scripture even when it’s difficult, but it requires trust. Is there another scripture that you struggle to follow, but have seen God move in your obedience of it?

The hope with this question is for it to be seen that God has proven himself trustworthy time and time again. We may not understand his ways, including roles of men and women in the church and home, but if he is the one who has called us to it, then there will be fruit in following Jesus.

3. Men: This passage and the one we study next week says that it is your role to act as servant leaders in the church. How is this going? Is there anything that God is calling you to work on?

Examples: Do the ladies in your group and church benefit from your example, friendship and service? Are you stepping up in leadership roles to serve your church and care for the church body?

4. Women: When it comes to submitting to the scriptures, and listening to the elders at church (not listening to all men, but just the men who are qualified elders). How is it going? What in your life makes this hard to submit to?
5. This passage continues to call both men and women to trust in Jesus as our savior. How does our pursuit of Jesus help us to give each other grace, and to walk in harmony with one another?

PRAYER

If you are in a co-ed group, pray together and intentionally pray for someone of the opposite sex. Paul calls us to love each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, in absolute purity. Pray for each others struggles, hopes, etc, and encourage each other that we serve a great savior that redeems our identity as male and female.



Week 9

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM YOUR PASTORS

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

SUMMARY

Paul addressed the roles of men and women in the church and now continues his train of thought by discussing the qualifications for leadership in God's Household. He begins with the "overseer", which is interchangeable in scripture with "pastor" and "elder". Paul communicates that the overseer of the church is a role given to called, qualified men of character. Next week, he discusses the servant leaders of the church and the qualities that *men and women* need to have to lead as deacons.

It is vital that pastors strive are following Jesus in how they live and behave. All Christians are called to follow Christ in our conduct, because Non-Christians are encouraged or discouraged to listen to the gospel by our personal response to our faith. This week we are going to discuss the conduct of a Christian and an elder (character). Next week we are going to look at the servant-hearted attitude of Christians and leaders.

GROUP INTRO

What is an important character quality that you aspire to or desire in yourself or your friends? What about in those you trust as leaders in your life?

TEXT

1. What stands out to you in this text?
2. What in the text indicates that the role of elder is given to called and qualified men?

This conversation could easily derail the conversation of the group, so I recommend telling the group that this will be a short conversation if it looks like it's going to be longer. The discussion that Paul just had in 1 Timothy 2:12-14 indicates that men are called to resume their Godly role as spiritual protector and teacher. Paul uses a different word for man in verse 2 than he previously did, one that usually doesn't stand for "brothers and sisters" but men. The qualifications for eldership is directed only to men, compared to the qualifications for deaconship that include men and women.

3. Why is it noble for a man to aspire to the role of an overseer/elder?

While not exhaustive, see Acts 20:28, Ephesians 4:11, 1 Peter 5:1, 4, 11

4. There is one qualification listed in Paul's list that is a skill and not a character quality. What is it, and why is it important for an overseer/elder to be able to do this?

Consider that one of the most important roles of a pastor is to teach and to refute false teaching. See 1 Timothy 4:1-5 and 5:17 as two examples, as well as Titus 1:9-11.

APPLICATION

1. Do any of you men feel called to be a pastor? For men or women, do any of you feel called to lead a community group or Sunday ministry? What's the next step for you to pursue that calling?
2. We may not all be called to be a pastor, but we are all called to maturity (Colossians 1:28), to show the fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), and to give a good witness to Christ in this world (Matthew 5:16). We do all this because we have been saved by Jesus and are adopted in His family, and now we seek to love Him and love others through serving Jesus in our lives.

How are you seeing yourself growing in Christ based on 1 Timothy 3:1-7? What do you need to repent of? Here's a quick breakdown. It may be helpful for the group to read each of these

sections out loud and look at these sentences together at the same time.

"I am faithful to my spouse, and if I'm single, I am faithful to my future spouse. This means I do not engage in sexual immorality or pornography. I reflect Christ's faithfulness to me and to His church through this."

"In Christ I have received the Holy Spirit, and am self controlled and not entrapped by any substance or lifestyle. Outsiders would look at my life and say I am not addicted or hooked to anything."

"I welcome outsiders and strangers and make them feel at home, just as Jesus did for me. This means I invite people into my home and my life regularly."

"Even when I am wronged, I seek neither vengeance or retaliation, but am gentle, because even when I was against Him, Jesus died for me."

"In Christ I have received every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. I can freely give and be generous because of the confidence I have in Christ, and how I spend, save, and give my money reflects that."

"Jesus is the chief shepherd who cares for his church. In the same way, I seek to take care of my household with dignity, love, and devotion."

"I have a growing view of God's holiness and the need for grace in my life, and grow regularly in my joy and response to Jesus' work to save me."

"My lack of perfection leads me to Jesus, the savior of my soul. I am both sinner and saint, and while I struggle, non-Christians can see a change in my affections and attitudes, and know that I belong to Christ. This leads them to be curious about my witness, and gives me the ability to share my faith without feeling guilty or like an imposter."

3. We can look at a list like this and 'fake it until we make it', or grow very discouraged that we aren't doing enough. How does the Bible encourage us to pursue Godly character in a grace-filled way?

Here is wonderful news: If we follow Jesus, we become more and more like him through His Spirit. We trust him and he causes the heart change. We see this truth in John 15:1-7, Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 3:18 and Philipians 2:12-13.

PRAYER

Pray for the ways you desire to grow in your character, in Christ, and that you would not despair and ignore it, or try to do it on your own strength. Pray also that your pastors would continue to exhibit these character traits.

Week 10

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM YOUR DEACONS

1 TIMOTHY 3:8-13

Leader note: At Living Stones, we believe that both qualified men and qualified women are called by God to serve as Deacons. The ESV translators opted to interpret verse 11 as "Their wives likewise...", but it's also perfectly acceptable to translate verse 11 as "Women likewise..."

Sincere Bible interpreters and theologians disagree about whether or not women are called by God to serve as Deacons.

For the most possible clarity about this issue, we recommend attending the Sunday worship gathering to hear this passage preached. And for your own personal study the following article may help you:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/bible-support-female-deacons-yes/>

SUMMARY

Last week we looked at the character required of Elders. We'll now look at the heart-level attitude expected of Deacons.

Deacons are God-given male and female servant leaders of reputable character, who are full of the Spirit and of wisdom, and appointed by the Elders to serve crucial needs of the church so that the Elders can devote themselves to the ministry of the Word and to prayer.

In other words, Deacons serve. They serve the practical, tangible needs of people. And their service is a kind of picture of the service Jesus Himself embodied throughout His earthly ministry: sacrificial, humble, and generous.

This section of Scripture gives us a peek into God's priorities for leadership in the church. If we're attentive to those priorities and willing to adopt them as our own, then the church will better reflect the Lord who came not to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many.

GROUP INTRO

This week's passage is about Deacons, the church's servants who help with practical, tangible needs.

With this in mind, describe a time when you received terrible service at a restaurant. What was missing? What was done that made your experience unpleasant?

TEXT

1. Take a moment to read about the first Deacons in Acts 6:1-4. What was the result of Deacons stepping up to help the church?

Leader help: The author, Luke, connects the appointment of Deacons to the gospel spreading across Jerusalem in verse 7. In other words, because Deacons made themselves available to help, people were hearing the good news and being saved by faith in Jesus. Eternity was being impacted by their practical service.

2. Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13 together. If you were in charge of picking Deacons, summarize in your own words what Paul says you'd need to see in potential candidates. Why are these qualifications important?

Leader help: This simple question can help us to observe what the Bible says before we try to interpret what the Bible says. The qualifications help to ensure that God's church is cared for in God's way - God absolutely loves His people and wants them to be really well cared for.

3. Verse 9 states that Deacons must *“hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.”* This means that Deacons must hold to the basics of Christian doctrine. If someone were to ask you what biblical teachings make Christianity unique, how would you respond?

Leader help: The Trinity (one God exists in three equal Persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit); God created everything; all of humanity is guilty before God because of our sin; Jesus is the only Savior; Jesus is truly human and truly God; Jesus truly died on the cross and physically resurrected from the dead; humans are saved by faith alone in Jesus alone; eternal life is a gracious gift from God.

4. Earlier in his ministry the Apostle Paul preached a sermon in ancient Greece and said this: *“The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything...”* (Acts 17:24-25). If God doesn’t need Deacons, why are Deacons something He instituted in the church?

Leader help: Deacons are not meeting God’s needs; instead God meets our needs through Deacons. To put it simply: God serves us and He does this because He loves us. This is what Jesus announced in Mark 10:45 and it’s what He demonstrated in John 13:1-17. We aren’t loved by some pathetic, needy God, but an all-powerful, generous God!

5. Why do you think God promises a reward to those who serve well as Deacons (see verse 13)?

Leader help: Deacon work is difficult work. And much of it may be done without public recognition. But God sees, and God rewards hard work done by faith for His glory. So if you are a Deacon, be encouraged! God sees you and your work, along with all of the challenges you face!

APPLICATION

1. If you were assessed as a potential Deacon, which area of your own attitude or character would you say needs growth? How can we as a group help one another grow in this area?
2. One of the truths that sets Christianity apart from all other faiths is that Jesus came to serve His people, giving us what we couldn't earn. Where in your life do you need Jesus to step in and serve you? Where in your life do you need to humble yourself and ask for His help?
3. Some may view being a Deacon as a "stepping stone" toward becoming an Elder. But Scripture shows us that the office of Deacon has its own calling, dignity, and beauty. With this in mind, how can we honor our Deacons this week or in the near future?

PRAYER

- Thank God for serving you and giving you everything you need.
- Ask God to bless, protect, and empower your Deacons, and thank Him for them.
- Pray for God to give your church more Deacons who will honor the name of Jesus.



Week 11

THE PILLAR OF TRUTH

1 TIMOTHY 3:14-15

SUMMARY

If the living God has a church, then that church can never be considered irrelevant, dangerous, unnecessary, or dead. Unless the church renounces its identity and abandons its mission.

In this section, Paul tells Timothy his reason for writing this letter, and in so doing, reveals the eternal significance of the church by showing us the church's identity and mission. We discover that the church is God's household, given the privilege of holding up *the* truth. In other words, the church doesn't decide the truth, change the truth, or create the truth; no, God's family displays God's truth - the eternal, unchanging truth of Jesus Christ.

So while talks, messages, worship experiences, and revivals may be helpful, they aren't what God wants His family to display; God wants His family proclaiming the full message of Jesus.

GROUP INTRO

If you had to summarize the mission of the church, what words would you use? Why?

TEXT

1. Read 1 Timothy 3:14-15 together. Why did Paul write this letter to Timothy? Is Paul's reason for writing still relevant today?

Leader help: Paul wrote so that Timothy and the Christians he was tasked with helping would know how to live out their faith in Jesus.

We know Paul's reason for writing is still relevant because of the language he uses - "so that [...] you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God" - as long as the household of God exists (i.e. God's family), we will need to know how to act and speak.

2. What is the identity of the church according to this passage? What is the mission of the church?

Leader help: The church is "God's household" or "God's family unit"/"God's kids"; the church is also God's dwelling place, or God's house; the church is also a "pillar and buttress of the truth" - meaning the church is God's people who support and proclaim the truth.

Since we belong to God and are to be supporting and proclaiming the truth, we should be all about what God is about - making disciples of all nations and proclaiming the gospel.

3. Where else in Scripture can we look to discover what Paul means by the word “truth”? What is the truth according to Scripture?

Leader help: Jesus says in John 17:17, as He is praying to God the Father, “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.” In other words, the Bible isn’t just true, it’s the very standard of truth - all other claims about God, humanity, meaning, purpose, etc. must be measured by the Bible. And the Bible is, according to Jesus Himself, all about Him (see Luke 24:27 and John 5:39).

Essentially, the “truth” is everything in Scripture, and Scripture is centrally about Jesus.

4. Why is Paul concerned about the behavior of God’s children? Why does it matter how Christians think, speak, and act?

Leader help: The first reason it matters is because God is among us and He deserves to be honored and obeyed.

Second, our actions and words - if a reflection of God’s holiness and grace - can provide a great platform for proclaiming the good news of Jesus. Or our actions and words can be a demonstration of hypocrisy and a reason why God is blasphemed amongst unbelievers (see Romans 2:23-24). We want God to be known, trusted, and worshiped, not ignored, belittled, and rejected.

APPLICATION

1. Supporting and proclaiming the truth of the Bible isn't just the job of pastors or professional missionaries. How will you play your part in proclaiming the truth?
2. How do you most often fail to stand for biblical truth? Why? How does the gospel apply to your failures?
3. What are some current lies about God that are common in our culture and, sometimes, in the church? What can we do to combat these lies?
4. Throughout 1 Timothy so far, what is one behavior (a way of thinking, speaking, or acting) that you want to grow more godly in?

PRAYER

- Thank God for making you one of His kids by grace alone.
- Thank God for giving you a new heart that receives and loves His truth, even when it is uncomfortable or hard to hold onto.
- Ask the Spirit to bring change to one specific way of thinking, speaking, or acting in your life.

Additional Resources

Commentaries

[Commentary on 1-2 Timothy & Titus by Andreas Kostenberger](#)

[Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus by Platt, Akin, and Merida](#)

[Reformed Expository Commentary: 1 Timothy by Philip G. Ryken](#)

[Reformed Expository Commentary: 2 Timothy & Titus by Doriani & Phillips](#)

Sermons

[1 Timothy Sermons \(monergism.com\)](#)

[2 Timothy Sermons \(monergism.com\)](#)

Other

[Phillip Jensen on Teaching 1 Timothy](#)

[Gospel Coalition Course \(Includes Whole-Bible Insights\)](#)

[The Church by Edmund Clowney \(Book\)](#)

[Rediscover Church by Hansen and Leeman \(Book\)](#)

[Love Your Church by Tony Merida \(Book\)](#)