



1 Timothy

Paul's letter to his son in the faith urging him to hold fast to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

devotional

1 Timothy



Read: 1 Timothy 1

If you have a pulse, you have a past. We all have things in our past we would rather not remember because remembering makes us uncomfortable. Maybe it was the names you called a classmate behind his back, or the failed marriage you pretend never happened.

Paul, in his first letter to a young pastor named Timothy, shows us how remembering the past helps us appreciate the present. After openly stating his past wrongs, Paul says, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst” (1 Tim 1:12-15).

None of us were good enough to earn a place in heaven — not even Paul, who started churches all over the world and wrote half of the New Testament. Salvation is a gift we didn’t deserve and didn’t earn. When we omit parts of our story or pretend we’ve always been this godly, it cheapens the sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf.

Eager as we are to forget our past, it’s only when we put down our perfect fronts and acknowledge how God saved us from our messy pasts that we can experience the freedom of God’s grace.

Reflect:

- What’s one part of your past that you’re embarrassed or ashamed of?
- When you think about who you were before you met Jesus and who you are now, what differences do you see?
- When was the last time you shared your story with someone? Ask God for an opportunity to share how He’s changed your life.



1 Timothy

Read: 1 Timothy 2:1-8

In 1 Timothy 2:1-2, Paul says, “I urge then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.”

As Christians, we are called to pray for those in authority: pastors, bosses, supervisors, managers, parents, school teachers, administrators, political leaders, etc. Not only are we called to pray for them, but we’re also told to thank God for each of these people. It’s important to remember that anyone in a position of authority has been put there on God’s authority (Romans 13:1). How we feel about them, their work or their policies does not excuse us from the call on our lives to pray for them. Paul also says in 1 Timothy 2:8, “Therefore I want people everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.” There are no conditions to this calling. We are simply called to pray, no matter our opinions.

Praying for and encouraging our leaders isn’t about asking God to find someone to take their place. Eventually every leader must step down, and it’s important that while they are in authority, we be willing to submit to God’s will for their lives—and ours— by thanking God for them and praying for their salvation, their protection and their ability to guide us and make wise decisions.

Reflect:

- When was the last time you encouraged or thanked someone who leads you?
- Set aside time this week to let at least one of the leaders in your life know that you appreciate them and are thankful for them. Why is it important to pray for people, even when we disagree with their decisions?

1 Timothy



Read: 1 Timothy 2:9-15

In the last book of *The Hunger Games* trilogy, leaders give Katniss, the main character, a sexy makeover for a video shoot. They run into a problem when her glamorous image takes away from the point of the video, which was to find common ground with the people, and to rally them to fight for their beliefs.

Too often, we have the same problem when it comes to modesty in the church: If how we dress gets in the way of pointing people to Jesus, we need to revamp our closets.

In 1 Timothy 2:10, Paul writes that Christians should dress in an appropriate way for those "who profess to worship God." We don't have to walk around wearing Christian T-shirts or full-length dresses, but we should recognize the difference between dressing to attract and dressing attractively. The first puts the focus on our bodies, where the second shows we are caring for our bodies which God has "bought at a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

As with all of God's commands, God made the command for modesty to benefit us. When we take seriously the call to adorn ourselves with "good deeds," we train our hearts to be more focused on what Jesus wants for us and less focused on how we look. As a result our identity becomes more about who we are in Christ, not how we dress.

God has so much more in store for us than our outward appearances. What we see in the mirror can never add to or take away from the value and worth He has already given us.

Reflect:

- What's the difference between dressing to attract or dressing attractively?
- What is one step you can take this week to focus on clothing yourself with "good deeds," as Paul instructs in 1 Timothy 2:10?



1 Timothy

Read: 1 Timothy 3:1-13

Every decision we make reveals every standard we set for our lives. Giving in to the pressures of purity, buying what we can't pay for, talking about someone we think we are better than all reveal our character. How we act will be determined by whether we are allowing the values of the world or the Bible to set the standards of our lives.

When our standards are dictated by people rather than God, we are automatically limited. We have to be careful not to draw conclusions about our value from what others say about us. Being a Christian is about how we live out our faith, and oftentimes, the right stance isn't going to be the most popular one.

In 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Paul gives us guidelines to live by because they are consistent with what God says is right and true. God is more concerned with who we are than with what we do. We are not given a list of duties to carry out, but qualities to live out.

Living a godly life starts at the heart. When we make God's priorities our priorities, we're less likely to allow work or volunteer activities to take us away from family responsibilities. When we see people the way Jesus saw people, we're less likely to treat people we know well and treat people we don't know poorly.

As a Christian, we represent Jesus at all times. Whatever we do, wherever we go, whatever we say, we make an impression of who Jesus is by what we say and how we act.

Reflect:

- Does your behaviour help or hinder your cause for Christ?
- Are you living by God's guidelines or your own?
- What one area in your life can you improve today?

1 Timothy



Read: 1 Timothy 3:14-16

In 1 Timothy 3, the apostle Paul is giving Timothy, a young pastor, instructions about how to lead his church. In case Paul got delayed on his way to see Timothy, he wanted the church to know how to live like people who follow Jesus.

Paul writes that part of the church's role is to be a pillar of truth and to explain to the world the secret of how to be godly (1 Timothy 3:16). The answer to how we are made right with God is revealed in the hymn that follows:

Jesus appeared in the flesh. Jesus was fully human. When Jesus was born, God came and lived among us.

Jesus was vindicated by the Holy Spirit. Jesus completely obeyed God and lived a perfect life. The resurrection was proof of the Holy Spirit's power in Him.

Jesus was seen by the angels and taken up in glory. Jesus wasn't just fully human, he was also fully divine.

As a man, Jesus lived a perfect life and gave us a perfect example of how to live. As God, Jesus gives us the power to do what is right. It is possible to live a godly life by following Jesus.

The church exists to share this message, because being made right with God starts with believing this one revolutionary idea: "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Reflect:

- What do you consider the most mysterious part of the Christian faith?
- What does it say about our God that He left heaven to dwell among us as a human?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how are you doing at being a "pillar of truth" and sharing Jesus' message with those around you?



1 Timothy

Read: 1 Timothy 4:1-6

Pretend for a moment that you're standing outside in a blizzard with only a T-shirt on. Would you refuse a jacket if one were offered to you? In the midst of freezing temperatures and billowing snows, the warmth a jacket provides would be more than desirable.

Not many of us would stand bare armed in a blizzard and refuse a jacket. We do, however, often refuse refuge from an even harsher environment. The tumultuous storms of this world can knock us clean off of our feet. However, we often find ourselves running toward the storm and away from the protection of a loving God.

When we refuse God, we also refuse His goodness and His blessings. When we turn away from His outstretched hand, we turn away from the protection and warmth He longs to give us.

Nothing this world can offer us, even the good things, will ever lead to true contentment. The only thing this world has to offer us is a temporary fix that deceptively leads to more emptiness.

Fortunately, we serve a God who holds more fulfillment, love, peace, healing and security than we could ever ask for. Ephesians 3:20 says God's good is beyond our wildest imagination, and far greater than anything good this world has to offer. If we let go of our good things and open our hands and hearts to receive God's goodness, we will have more good in our lives than we know what to do with.

Reflect:

- Have you ever lost something that you thought was good, and later realized it wasn't?
- What's the blizzard you're facing today? How have you tried to weather the storm so far?
- What is one way you can turn to God for protection?

1 Timothy



Read: 1 Timothy 4:7-11

Running a marathon isn't something we just wake up and do. To build the endurance to finish a 26.2-mile race takes months of strict, physical training. To get up every morning and run, whether or not you feel like it, takes commitment and discipline.

While there are physical benefits to this kind of training — strong legs, a healthy heart, washboard abs — there's a spiritual benefit to learning discipline as well. In 1 Timothy 4, Paul compares the drive it takes us to finish the Christian life well to the drive it takes to train for a race.

There are going to be mornings where we don't feel like reading the Bible. There will be Sundays where we don't feel like serving. There will be people we don't feel like forgiving. But like the athlete who pushes through to reach his goal, we make a conscious choice each day to push past our feelings and circumstances to keep following Jesus.

The difference between physical training and mental training is the reward. "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Timothy 4:8).

The medal we receive at the end of a race is nothing compared to the spiritual strength we receive when we learn to value discipline. Striving toward physical goals are great goals to have. But striving toward godliness has value in this life and the one to come.

Reflect:

- What's one area of your spiritual life where you're lacking discipline?
- What's the longest you ever worked to reach a goal? What did that experience teach you about discipline and perseverance?
- How can you apply some of the lessons you learned in that experience to being more disciplined in your spiritual life?



1 Timothy

Read: 1 Timothy 4:12-16

In 1 Timothy, Paul is advising Timothy on how to handle a difficult situation. At the time, Timothy is being sent in to address areas of concern within the church. No doubt, this was an overwhelming task. Timothy was younger than many of the people he would be advising, and he also likely had less religious experience. This, however, was not concerning to God. What we see in others and ourselves is not what God sees. God sees the heart. God is concerned not with age or experience, but with our conduct, love, faith and purity.

Paul tells Timothy not to let anyone look down on him because of his age, but the principle extends far beyond just age. The broader message is that God has a plan for us no matter what our perceived limitation. As believers, we are called specifically to pursue God's will above all else. This means that no matter our situation, we are without excuse when it comes to saying yes to what God puts in front of us. If we aren't dead, God's not done.

God is not waiting for us to reach a certain age, theological understanding or level of income to be used by Him. Our value to God lies in our obedience — not our age, race, gender or how much or how little we may have. Despite all the shortcomings we see in ourselves, we have the ability to confidently share Jesus' message with those around us.

Reflect:

- Have you been waiting to develop a certain characteristic before you feel comfortable serving God? What is it?
- How might the world have been different if Jesus had waited on an age or degree to fully obey God's plan?
- What's one step can you take today to pursue God's plan for your life?

1 Timothy



Read: 1 Timothy 5

When the word “church” comes up in conversation, the first thing we think of is a building. We have this mindset that church is a place we go to on Sundays. As we get our family dressed, fight through traffic and get a good seat, it’s easy to lose sight of the fact that we aren’t just going to church; we are the church.

In 1 Timothy 5, Paul describes the church as people dedicated to doing whatever it takes to reach out and help others. We have a responsibility to serve and help others in need as the church. Caring for each other as well as those outside of the church is the quickest way to see Jesus change lives. Too often, we see a need and wait for the pastor or someone on staff to take responsibility. But that’s not the way church works.

Each of us has been given skills, abilities and opportunities to serve. In Timothy’s church, for example, the women ran a widows ministry (1 Timothy 5:16), and elders directed church affairs while others were devoted just to teaching and preaching (1 Timothy 5:17).

In the Bible, church is always a reference to people, not a place. The church is a body of believers that live out the Gospel in their words and actions. The church is at its best when people inside the building take Jesus’ message outside the building and serve those they meet.

Reflect:

- Who do you know who is going through a tough time and could use a helping hand? What’s one thing you can do to serve that person this week?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how connected are you to the church during the week? What’s one way you can stay connected to the church long after service is over?
- How are you using your skills and abilities to serve in the church?



1 Timothy

Read: 1 Timothy 6:1-10

When the desire for money is greater than the desire to be more like Jesus, it breeds greed and discontent in our lives.

This was the case in Timothy's day. False teachers were implying that godliness is a means to financial gain (1 Timothy 6:5b). Paul warns Timothy to stay away from such teaching. He reminds Timothy that true wealth is found in knowing Jesus and recognizing that we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it (1 Timothy 6:7).

Money and stuff can be here today and gone tomorrow. When our worth is determined by what we have, we're just one job loss, one house fire or one bad decision away from hopelessness.

The satisfaction we get from stuff is fleeting. There will always be something newer, trendier and more advanced just around the corner.

True contentment is not fleeting. It is based on Who we know, not what we have. God is well aware of all our needs even before we ask. When our value and identity is based on who we are in Christ, we'll find that we already have more than we need.

Reflect:

- How often do you find yourself saying something like this: "If I could just _____, everything would be better"? What fills that blank for you? And what does that say about where you put your hope?
- Think about your complaints over the past month. In which areas of life do you experience the most discontent? When do you find yourself feeling the most discontent?
- What's one thing you can change to help you break the discontentment cycle?

1 Timothy



Read: 1 Timothy 6:11-21

The church building was small, hardly what we might consider structurally sound. Light shone through cracks in the logs of the wall. There was no floor but the dusty ground. Kenyan church members filled the rows of rickety wooden benches and service began. Unlike the visiting missionaries, the villagers didn't take a bus to get there. They left early that morning and walked for miles to reach the church. They poured their hearts out to God singing songs. And when it came time to give the offering, people without shoes, electricity or running water walked forward and placed money in a woven basket.

In 1 Timothy 6:17-19, Paul commands those who are rich not "to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment." Instead they are to "do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share." It's easy to dismiss verses directed to the wealthy when we see people around us with so much more. But Americans are among the wealthiest people in the world. It only takes \$34,000 a year, after taxes, to be among the richest 1 percent in the world. And as of 2005, about half of the richest 1 percent lived right here in the United States.

God asks us to give from what He has given us. We are to be generous with our time, our actions and our money. We have the ability to use what God has given us to bless others and point them to Jesus. That is an investment that will yield a return.

Reflect:

- Are you being generous with your time? Your money? Your talents?
- If there is an area where you are not giving generously, what is a step you can take this week to begin living generously?