

CHARLES R. SWINDOLL

SWINDOLL'S LIVING INSIGHTS NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY 1& 2 TIMOTHY • TITUS



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NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY

1 & 2 Timothy, Titus

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

R or more than sixty years I have loved the Bible. It was that love for the Scriptures, mixed with a clear call into the gospel ministry during my tour of duty in the Marine Corps, that resulted in my going to Dallas Theological Seminary to prepare for a lifetime of ministry. During those four great years I had the privilege of studying under outstanding men of God, who also loved God's Word. They not only held the inerrant Word of God in high esteem, they taught it carefully, preached it passionately, and modeled it consistently. A week never passes without my giving thanks to God for the grand heritage that has been mine to claim! I am forever indebted to those fine theologians and mentors, who cultivated in me a strong commitment to the understanding, exposition, and application of God's truth.

For more than fifty years I have been engaged in doing just that—*and how I love it!* I confess without hesitation that I am addicted to the examination and the proclamation of the Scriptures. Because of this, books have played a major role in my life for as long as I have been in ministry—especially those volumes that explain the truths and enhance my understanding of what God has written. Through these many years I have collected a large personal library, which has proven invaluable as I have sought to remain a faithful student of the Bible. To the end of my days, my major goal in life is to communicate the Word with accuracy, insight, clarity, and practicality. Without informative and reliable books to turn to, I would have "run dry" decades ago.

Among my favorite and most well-worn volumes are those that have enabled me to get a better grasp of the biblical text. Like most expositors, I am forever searching for literary tools that I can use to hone my gifts and sharpen my skills. For me, that means finding resources that make the complicated simple and easy to understand, that offer insightful comments and word pictures that enable me to see the relevance of sacred truth in light of my twenty-firstcentury world, and that drive those truths home to my heart in ways I do not easily forget. When I come across such books, they wind up in my hands as I devour them and then place them in my library for further reference . . . and, believe me, I often return to them. What a relief it is to have these resources to turn to when I lack fresh insight, or when I need just the right story or illustration, or when I get stuck in the tangled text and cannot find my way out. For the serious expositor, a library is essential. As a mentor of mine once said, "Where else can you have ten thousand professors at your fingertips?"

In recent years I have discovered there are not nearly enough resources like those I just described. It was such a discovery that prompted me to consider becoming a part of the answer instead of lamenting the problem. But the solution would result in a huge undertaking. A writing project that covers all of the books and letters of the New Testament seemed overwhelming and intimidating. A rush of relief came when I realized that during the past fifty-plus years I've taught and preached through most of the New Testament. In my files were folders filled with notes from those messages that were just lying there, waiting to be brought out of hiding, given a fresh and relevant touch in light of today's needs, and applied to fit into the lives of men and women who long for a fresh word from the Lord. *That did it!* I began to work on plans to turn all of those notes into this commentary on the New Testament.

I must express my gratitude to both Mark Gaither and Mike Svigel for their tireless and devoted efforts, serving as my hands-on, day-to-day editors. They have done superb work as we have walked our way through the verses and chapters of all twenty-seven New Testament books. It has been a pleasure to see how they have taken my original material and helped me shape it into a style that remains true to the text of the Scriptures, at the same time interestingly and creatively developed, and all the while allowing my voice to come through in a natural and easy-to-read manner.

I need to add sincere words of appreciation to the congregations I have served in various parts of these United States for more than five decades. It has been my good fortune to be the recipient of their love, support, encouragement, patience, and frequent words of affirmation as I have fulfilled my calling to stand and deliver God's message year after year. The sheep from all those flocks have endeared themselves to this shepherd in more ways than I can put into words... and none more than those I currently serve with delight at Stonebriar Community Church in Frisco, Texas.

Finally, I must thank my wife, Cynthia, for her understanding of my addiction to studying, to preaching, and to writing. Never has she discouraged me from staying at it. Never has she failed to urge me in the pursuit of doing my very best. On the contrary, her affectionate support personally, and her own commitment to excellence in leading Insight for Living for more than three and a half decades, have combined to keep me faithful to my calling "in season and out of season." Without her devotion to me and apart from our mutual partnership throughout our lifetime of ministry together, Swindoll's Living Insights would never have been undertaken.

I am grateful that it has now found its way into your hands and, ultimately, onto the shelves of your library. My continued hope and prayer is that you will find these volumes helpful in your own study and personal application of the Bible. May they help you come to realize, as I have over these many years, that God's Word is as timeless as it is true.

The grass withers, the flower fades,

But the word of our God stands forever. (Isa. 40:8)

Chuck Swindoll Frisco, Texas

THE STRONG'S NUMBERING SYSTEM

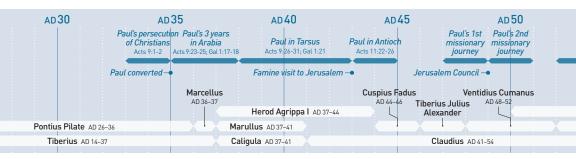
Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary uses the Strong's wordstudy numbering system to give both newer and more advanced Bible students alike quicker, more convenient access to helpful original-language tools (e.g., concordances, lexicons, and theological dictionaries). The Strong's numbering system, made popular by *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, is used with the majority of biblical Greek and Hebrew reference works. Those who are unfamiliar with the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek alphabets can quickly find information on a given word by looking up the appropriate index number. Advanced students will find the system helpful because it allows them to quickly find the lexical form of obscure conjugations and inflections.

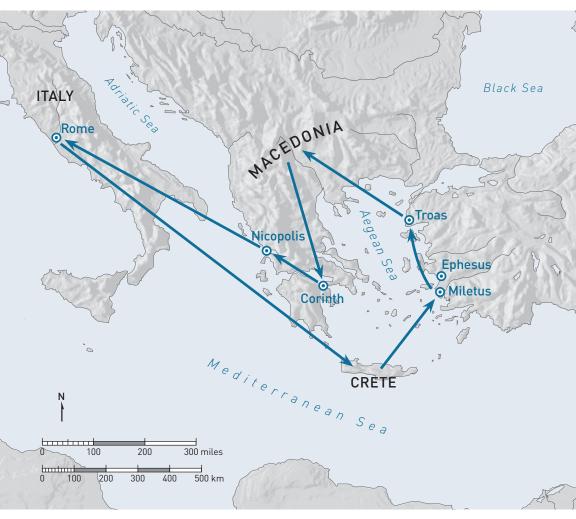
When a Greek word is mentioned in the text, the Strong's number is included in square brackets after the Greek word. So in the example of the Greek word $agap\bar{e}$ [26], "love," the number is used with Greek tools keyed to the Strong's system.

On occasion, a Hebrew word is mentioned in the text. The Strong's Hebrew numbers are completely separate from the Greek numbers, so Hebrew numbers are prefixed with a letter "H." So, for example, the Hebrew word *kapporet* [H₃₇₂₇], "mercy seat," comes from *kopher* [H₃₇₂₂], "to ransom," "to secure favor through a gift."

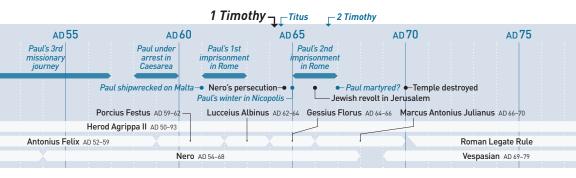
INSIGHTS ON 1 TIMOTHY

Throughout his letter, Paul kept Timothy's eye focused on the ultimate prize of a shepherd: a godly congregation. Paul "labored and strived" for godliness in every church he established and strengthened. In this letter, the apostle laid his shepherd's mantle across the shoulders of his pupil, Timothy. If you serve today as a pastor or spiritual leader, this mantle has passed to you as well.









1 TIMOTHY

t had been a long five years. At least half a decade on the sidelines, forbidden to travel, unable to conduct ministry among the churches. Five years of lawyers, courts, politics . . . and the hardest of all, waiting. For a man of action like Paul, the waiting must have felt unbearable.

Paul's ability to travel freely came to a sudden end with his arrest in Jerusalem. Religious enemies accused him of—among other things bringing an uncircumcised, unconverted Gentile into an area restricted to Hebrew men. After Paul's initial arrest, a plot to kill him prompted his relocation to Caesarea Maritima for his own protection. For at least two years, Paul waited in Caesarea as Governor Felix teased Jewish officials with the prospect of his execution (Acts 24:27). Further trials under Governor Festus forced an appeal to Caesar in Rome (Acts 25:1-12), leading to a treacherous journey and two more years of house arrest in the seat of Roman power (Acts 27–28, AD 60–62).

Despite the long months of waiting, the time didn't go to waste. In fact, everything occurred to fulfill God's plan (see Acts 9:15-16; 23:11). At the very least, the hiatus gave the tireless apostle a much-needed rest after three missionary journeys. Having logged more than ten years and twenty thousand miles—some by sea, mostly on foot—any traveler would be weary and need time to recharge. Robbers, exposure, stoning, flogging, prison, riots, murderous plots, renegade disciples, and fickle congregations had taken their toll (see 2 Cor. 11:23-28). More importantly, Paul's captivity in the governor's palace gave him plenty of time to receive visitors and to reflect on his experiences, which he described freely to Israel's rulers (Acts 24–26). Then a relatively comfortable

THE BOOK OF 1 TIMOTHY AT A GLANCE

SECTION	GREETING AND SALUTATION	PERSONAL ENCOURAGEMENT AND EXHORTATION
PASSAGE	1:1-2	1:3-20
THEMES	• "Grace, mercy, and peace" (1:2)	• Timothy's task • Paul's testimony • Gospel's trust
EMPHASIS		The Work of Ministry
COMMAND	Be true!	
"MUSICAL" INTERLUDES	Hymn 1:17 "Now to the King eternal"	

THE MINISTRY CHAPTERS 2-3	THE MINISTER CHAPTERS 4-6
Chapter 2: Men and women (prayer and submission) Chapter 3: Elders and deacons (qualifications and leadership)	Chapter 4: Seeing the importance of: • Faithful teaching • Sound doctrine • True godliness • Perseverance Chapter 5: Paying attention to: • Various age groups • Widows • Elders • Wisdom Chapter 6: Maintaining balance between: • Masters and slaves • Rich and poor • Internals and externals
	The One Who Ministers
Be wise!	Be strong and faithful!
Hymn 3:16 "He who was revealed"	Hymn 6:15-16 "Blessed and only Sovereign"

sojourn in Rome allowed him unprecedented access to the political elite in Nero's court (Phil. 1:13). And, of course, he used this five-year respite from itinerant ministry to write. He celebrated the supremacy of Christ in his letter to the Colossians. He praised the Philippians for their constant prayers and generosity. He reasoned with Philemon to welcome his runaway slave, Onesimus, as a new brother in Christ. And he urged the Ephesians to affirm their unity in the love of Christ as well as stand firm against the adversary's attacks.

Before the Jewish officials in Jerusalem had forced him into protective custody, Paul planned to visit Rome and then spearhead an evangelistic tour of the western part of the Roman Empire, as far as Spain (Acts 19:21; Rom. 15:28). During his absence, however, false teachers had filled the vacuum he left in Macedonia and Asia, polluting the gospel with a variety of false teachings (Rom. 16:17; 2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:6; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 6:3; Rev. 2:6, 15). Moreover, his brief visit to Crete on the way to Rome revealed a great need for structure (Titus 1:5), as leaderless congregations had fallen prey to the Judaizers' legalism and Greek dissipation (Titus 1:10-14). Upon his release from imprisonment in Rome, Paul would have to stabilize these troubled churches before launching anything westward.

CLUES TO PAUL'S WHEREABOUTS BETWEEN FIRST AND SECOND ROMAN IMPRISONMENTS

After Release from His First Roman Imprisonment, Paul wrote:	What This Tells Us:
"As I urged you [Timothy] upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus" (1 Tim. 1:3).	At some point, Timothy was in Ephesus as Paul set out for Macedonia.
"I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long" (1 Tim. 3:14).	Paul intended to join Timothy in Ephesus.
"Until I come" (1 Tim. 4:13).	
"For this reason I left you [Titus] in Crete" (Titus 1:5).	At some point, Paul ministered on Crete with Titus, and then left him there.
"When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you [Titus], make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there" (Titus 3:12).	After leaving Titus on Crete, Paul's itinerary would take him to Nicopolis.

 "When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments" (2 Tim. 4:13). "Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus" (2 Tim. 4:20). During his second imprisonment, Paul indicates that he spent time in Troas after his first release. Paul's itinerary between imprisonments took him through Corinth and Miletus. 	During His Second Roman Imprisonment, Paul wrote:	
Trophimus I left sick at Miletus" imprisonments took him through	which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the	Paul indicates that he spent time
	Trophimus I left sick at Miletus"	imprisonments took him through

The time between Paul's first and second imprisonments in Rome remains a mystery. We can arrange only tidbits from his letters to Timothy and Titus to form a hypothetical timeline. He most likely departed Rome for a kind of farewell tour (refer to the map, "Paul's Planned Farewell Tour"), during which he deployed his assistants for long-term assignments. After several weeks on Crete, he left Titus (Titus 1:5), taking the rest of his entourage with him to Miletus, where he left a sick Trophimus in the care of friends (2 Tim. 4:20). Before departing, Paul probably sent for Timothy, whom he had sent from Rome to serve in Ephesus. He most likely avoided visiting the city to reduce the possibility of becoming entangled in local affairs (cf. Acts 20:16). Regardless, he "urged" Timothy to remain on in Ephesus. Paul then sailed from Miletus to Troas, where he probably spent the winter of AD 63–64, taking time to write his letter to Titus. As soon as weather permitted, he departed for Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea), leaving his cloak and books behind (2 Tim. 4:13), perhaps with instructions for Carpus to send his belongings to Rome via ship after the apostle himself arrived there.

After a brief visit with the churches he had established during his third missionary journey, Paul *intended* to turn south for Corinth and then over to Nicopolis, where he planned to spend the winter with Titus (Titus 3:12) before setting sail for Rome again. But something interrupted his plans. Troubling news arrived from Ephesus. During his brief visit with Timothy in Miletus, he implored the younger minister to remain at his post, but the difficulties Timothy faced required a letter of support and then a personal visit by the apostle (1 Tim. 3:14-15; 4:13). He probably cut short his visit to Macedonia and then retraced his steps through Troas and over to Ephesus.

After stabilizing the church in Ephesus, Paul left Timothy in charge and then resumed his original plan to winter in Nicopolis with Titus. The following spring (AD 65), he departed for Rome, intending to launch his mission westward, but tensions between Nero and Christians escalated out of control, and Paul landed in prison again, where an executioner took his life at the whim of a crazed emperor—the same fate as befell many believers during that awful time.

"A TRUE CHILD IN THE FAITH"

Paul first encountered Timothy in the first months of his second missionary journey (AD 50; see Acts 16:1-2). He arrived in Lystra to hear the elders speak with such glowing praise of the young man that the apostle felt compelled to meet him. Born of a believing Jewish mother and a Greek father (presumably an unbeliever), Paul found in Timothy an ideal pupil, an individual much like himself: a devout follower of Christ with one foot in the Jewish world and the other in the Gentile. As the years passed, he also found in Timothy a kindred spirit-studious (2 Tim. 3:14-15), emotional (2 Tim. 1:4), dedicated (Phil. 2:22), and resolute (1 Tim. 1:18). From his youth, Timothy had been steeped in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, thanks to his mother, Lois, and grandmother, Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). In return, Timothy found Paul to be a worthy model, a man gifted in many ways, but called to fulfill a mission ill-suited for his natural inclinations. He had not been trained to speak publicly, his appearance and demeanor apparently lacked polish, and his poor health made traveling a burden (1 Cor. 1:17; 2:3; 2 Cor. 10:10; 11:6; 12:7; Gal 4:13-14). Both men would have to carry out their ministry through a shared dependence upon God to equip and direct them.

TIMOTHY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT		
Acts 16:1-3	2 Corinthians 1:19	
Acts 17:14-15	Philippians 1:1	
Acts 18:1-5	Philippians 2:19-24	
Acts 19:21-22	Colossians 1:1-2	
Acts 20:1-5	1 Thessalonians 1:1-2	
Romans 16:21	1 Thessalonians 3:1-6	
1 Corinthians 4:16-17	2 Thessalonians 1:1	
1 Corinthians 16:10-11	Philemon 1:1	
2 Corinthians 1:1	Hebrews 13:22-24	

For Timothy to become a part of Paul's ministry, he had to be circumcised (Acts 16:3), not for spiritual reasons, but for practical ones. While Paul considered himself an apostle to the Gentiles (Eph. 3:1), he always first took the gospel to the synagogue when entering a new region (Acts 13:46; 17:2-3), and only then to the marketplace. Paul preached to Jews first because it was right, not because it was easy or even effective. Timothy had heard the stories of Paul's first visit to the lower Galatian region. The Jews in Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium had persecuted Paul and Barnabas, eventually stoning Paul and leaving him for dead (Acts 14:19). Nevertheless, Paul returned, employing the same methods that had earned him such hardship before. Timothy, by now a dutifully circumcised Jew, stood alongside his mentor in the synagogues.

In time, Paul came to see Timothy as an extension of himself, sending his "true child in the faith" to solve problems he normally would have undertaken. On his second missionary journey, when Paul worried that the churches in Macedonia—Thessalonica in particular—might have succumbed to Jewish persecution, he sent Timothy to "strengthen and encourage" the members of the church (1 Thes. 3:1-2). During his third missionary journey, he sent Timothy (and Erastus) ahead from Ephesus to prepare the churches in Macedonia and Greece for his visit (Acts 19:21-22). Then, in final preparation for his long-anticipated journey to Spain—he never expected to see most of his pupils again—Paul placed Timothy in charge of the church in Ephesus, the most strategically important congregation in Asia and, situated in a center for pagan philosophy, the church most susceptible to corruption.

"REMAIN ON AT EPHESUS"

Of all the cities in the Roman Empire, Ephesus would have been one of the most difficult places in which to lead a "tranquil and quiet life" (1 Tim. 2:2), let alone to lead a tranquil and quiet church. This port city sat alongside the Aegean Sea at the mouth of the Cayster River near the intersection of two important mountain passes. Ephesus therefore commanded a strategic position offering access in all directions from the sea, making the city a busy and affluent economic hub for the Roman province of Asia. Materials and knowledge flowed into the city from all over the world, feeding its voracious appetite for more wealth and new philosophies.

Ephesus was renowned for its paganism—as many as fifty different gods and goddesses were worshiped there.¹ None, however, challenged the economic and mystical power of the towering Temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Worship of the Earth Mother had become a huge attraction, combining tourism and sensual idolatry with such success that it fueled the city's core economy (Acts 19), despite Ephesus's already burgeoning import-export trade. City officials set aside one month of every year to honor the goddess with a grand celebration, during which all work ceased. The stadium hosted athletic games, the theater produced plays, the odeum held concerts, and people flocked from every corner of Asia and beyond to

9



The people of Ephesus worshiped Artemis (a.k.a. Diana) the mother goddess, depicted here with multiple breasts to signify fertility. Her value to the city was more than religious. Much of the city's economy depended upon the influx of worshipers' money.

make offerings in the sacred grove, the mythical birthplace of Artemis. Worship of the goddess brought such enormous sums of money into the temple that it became an important banking institution, perhaps the first of its kind in Asia. Moreover, the city of Ephesus became a sanctuary for debtors,² a place of refuge for anyone seeking to avoid his creditor's demands.³

If the lure of money and magic didn't add enough chaos, the city of Ephesus also attracted schools of philosophy. Around 500 BC, Heraclitus, a Greek noble of Ephesus, taught that the universe operates according to a unified ordering principle, which he called logos, "the Word." Later philosophers built upon this theory, claiming that all the laws of physics, mathematics, reason, and even morality can be traced back to an impersonal divine mind. By the time of Paul, Ephesus had become a veritable cauldron of competing philosophies and a celebrated repository of texts on Greek philosophy.

For all its temptations and challenges, Ephesus's strategic location made it a perfect base of operations for Paul's ministry in Asia. To ensure the church would remain morally

INTRODUCTION

uncorrupted, doctrinally pure, and spiritually vibrant, he spent more time in Ephesus than in any other Gentile city. Moreover, he nurtured the congregation from afar, sending envoys to check on its members' well-being, writing at least one letter, and—perhaps most significant of all—placing them in the hands of his star disciple, Timothy.

"IT IS FOR THIS WE LABOR AND STRIVE"

Ephesus was a city built of marble. Marble paved the streets, lined the foundations, supported the monuments, and channeled rainwater to the sea. Even the public toilets were constructed from polished marble. The city gleamed with white iridescence, as if to say to the world, "This city will shine forever." (Even today, tour guides encourage visitors to the magnificent remains of the ancient city to wear sunglasses at midday to avoid eye damage.) So, the church in Ephesus had to be built of equally sturdy stuff. To withstand the crashing chaos battering its foundations, the congregation needed order above all; and with so many strong personalities present, their pastor would have to lead with a firm yet loving hand.

Paul expressed the central purpose of his letter in 1 Timothy 3:15: "I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth." While the apostle did discuss important theological truths, he wrote primarily to equip Timothy for the task of leading and stabilizing the church. He began by offering personal encouragement, exhorting Timothy to fight hard for the gospel (1:1-20). The opponents of the truth would fight ruthlessly to tear it down. He described the essential qualities Timothy should cultivate within the congregation (2:1–3:16), which he hoped would influence the city at large. Then Paul instructed his student on the role of a shepherd: the faithful teaching and preaching of the Word, his conduct among the flock, and the inevitable resistance he would face from within as well as from without (4:1–6:21).

Throughout his letter, Paul kept Timothy's eye focused on the ultimate prize of a shepherd: a godly congregation. "Bodily discipline is only of little profit," he wrote, "but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come" (4:8). Paul "labored and strived" for this in every church he established and strengthened. In this letter, the apostle laid his shepherd's mantle across the shoulders of his pupil, Timothy. If you serve today as a pastor or spiritual leader, this mantle has passed to you as well.

APOSTLE PAUL TO PASTOR TIMOTHY (1 TIMOTHY 1:1-20)

Leading a church isn't easy. If churches were filled with perfect people emotionally and spiritually mature, impervious to temptation, immune from pride—the pastor's job would be a breeze. As it stands, however, the local church functions much like a hospital in which the patients take care of one another. Sick and wounded people help other sick and wounded people, led by an administrator—himself a patient—who leads everyone to call upon the Great Physician for healing. Leading a congregation of sinners, then, becomes a delicate balance. As a church, we must establish an environment in which sinners feel welcome while maintaining an uncompromising stance against sin.

After a short salutation, Paul discusses a duty that gives every pastor headaches: determining who among the sin-sick congregation is best suited to teach and to help lead the church toward righteousness.

What's a Pastor to Do? 1 TIMOTHY 1:1-11

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, *who is* our hope,

²To Timothy, *my* true child in *the* faith: Grace, mercy *and* peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³As I urged you ^aupon my departure for Macedonia, ^bremain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, ⁴ nor to ^apay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation ¹This letter is from Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, appointed by the command of God our Savior and Christ Jesus, who gives us hope. NLT

²I am writing to Timothy, my true son in the faith.

May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy, and peace.

³When I left for Macedonia, I urged you to stay there in Ephesus and stop those whose teaching is contrary to the truth. ⁴Don't let them waste their time in endless discussion of myths and spiritual pedigrees. These things

NASB

rather than *furthering* ^bthe administration of God which is by faith. ⁵But the goal of our ^ainstruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, ⁷wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.

⁸ But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers ¹⁰a and ^bimmoral men ^a and homosexuals ^a and kidnappers ^a and liars ^a and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, ¹¹ according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.

1:3 ^aLit while going to ^bLit to remain 1:4 ^aOr occupy themselves with ^bLit God's provision 1:5 ^aLit commandment 1:10 ^aLit for ^bOr fornicators only lead to meaningless speculations,* which don't help people live a life of faith in God.*

⁵The purpose of my instruction is that all believers would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith. ⁶But some people have missed this whole point. They have turned away from these things and spend their time in meaningless discussions. ⁷They want to be known as teachers of the law of Moses, but they don't know what they are talking about, even though they speak so confidently.

⁸We know that the law is good when used correctly. 9For the law was not intended for people who do what is right. It is for people who are lawless and rebellious, who are ungodly and sinful, who consider nothing sacred and defile what is holy, who kill their father or mother or commit other murders. ¹⁰The law is for people who are sexually immoral, or who practice homosexuality, or are slave traders,* liars, promise breakers, or who do anything else that contradicts the wholesome teaching ¹¹that comes from the glorious Good News entrusted to me by our blessed God.

1:4a Greek in myths and endless genealogies, which cause speculation. **1:4b** Greek a stewardship of God in faith. **1:10** Or kidnappers.

Of all of the vocations one might enter, Christian ministry would have to be the most confusing. For a person who finishes his or her medical school training, hanging out a shingle and practicing medicine is the logical next step. The details of running a practice can be overwhelming, but the mission remains clear. Everyone knows the job description of a physician: treat patients and help them stay healthy.

The same can be said of an attorney. Once law school is complete and the exacting bar exam passed, a lawyer uses his or her know-how to advise and represent clients in legal matters. A CPA earns a degree, passes a very difficult exam, and then applies his or her expertise in the field of finance. The job profile of a minister, however, isn't nearly so clear-cut. To enter ministry is to step into a milieu of high and lofty yet utterly ambiguous expectations. A young minister might unwittingly step into the shoes of a legendary predecessor, which he can never hope to fill. Or, someone reared and trained in one part of the country follows God's leading to another region, with just enough cultural differences to frustrate everyone. Or, as occurs very often, a church diligently seeks an expert in theology with years of pulpit experience, only to resist his spiritual leadership, criticize his temperament, and complain about his preaching once he arrives.

Then, there's the whole realm of theology. So many books and articles written, so many voices, so many alleged authorities with all sorts of perspectives on innumerable topics related to the church. The pastor is expected to be a walking encyclopedia of Bible knowledge, an expert on all the latest theological trends, a flawless public speaker, an inspiring executive leader, a servant-hearted shepherd, a gifted counselor, an authority on children and youth, and a caretaker of the aged, sick, dying, and grieving—as well as a dedicated husband and faithful family man!

With so many hats to wear, so many shoes to fill, so many expectations to meet and roles to play, a young pastor can forget why he entered the ministry in the first place. So, what's a pastor to do? Fortunately, the Holy Spirit inspired a remarkable servant of God to write a letter to a gifted pastor so that he, and shepherds today, might know for certain what the Lord expects of them, how other ministers can serve under a gifted pastor's leadership, and how congregations may encourage and support all full-time vocational ministers.

<u>-1:1-2</u>

The letter opens with a warm greeting from one close friend to another. A seasoned and scarred apostle, bearded and no doubt balding, wrote as a man who understood the rigors of ministry. Nevertheless, he included the title "apostle," which might seem strange in a personal greeting to his closest associate. That would be like my signing a letter to one of my sons:

Love, Dad, Senior Pastor

Paul inserted the title for two reasons. First, *it helped the church in Ephesus*. Paul wrote to Timothy, but he intended every word to be heard by the churches in public readings. "Apostle" described someone sent to accomplish a task on behalf of a sender. And all first-century cultures recognized the same basic rule: Treat an envoy as you would the sender, for that will determine how you are treated in return. God sent Paul, and Paul sent Timothy.

Second, *it helped Timothy be confident*. Only here and in his greeting to Titus did Paul use the phrase, "according to the commandment of God" (cf. Titus 1:3). Paul's authority to preach, teach, write, and lead came from God's command, which he passed to Timothy upon sending him to Ephesus. This is not to suggest any sort of "apostolic succession." Once the last of the apostles died, the title and authority of apostleship ended. Before the New Testament Scriptures had been collected and vetted by the churches, however, one depended upon the recommendation of a trusted source before receiving anyone's teaching as authentic. God had authorized Paul's ministry; now Timothy stood among the Ephesians with the same authority to teach and to lead.

Paul may have intended another benefit when he included his title. It may have helped Timothy, a soldier in God's army, feel less alone to be reminded that he was reading the words of a comrade-in-arms. Unfortunately, ministry brings its share of loneliness, for a pastor especially. He dare not share too much of his life with any but the most trusted associates. The title "apostle" would remind Timothy that they shared burdens that few outside of pastoral ministry can appreciate.

Paul's affection for Timothy as a pupil comes through when he calls him "my true child in the faith," similar to the apostle's greeting to Titus (Titus 1:4). The phrase "true child" depends upon the technical word *gnēsios* [1103], which, when used with "child," distinguished a natural-born heir from an adoptee. Paul loved Timothy and Titus like sons, and like a diligent father, he prepared them to succeed in a less-than-ideal world.

Paul's benediction also suggests an added affection. He frequently imparted "grace" and "peace" in his greetings, but to Timothy alone the apostle wished for "mercy" (cf. 2 Tim. 1:2), a highly emotive word in Greek and the most common translation of the Hebrew term *hesed* [H2617], "gracious, faithful love." Perhaps Paul recognized that Timothy's tender disposition would cause him to need the Lord's empathy while he served in the philosophical and religious tumult that characterized the city of Ephesus and often shook the church located there.

— 1:3-4 —

After a relatively short greeting, Paul got down to business. He offered his younger friend four specific directives, presumably in response to something specific Paul either heard from Ephesus or knew about the city from his own experience.

First, *stay at the task* (1:3). Paul urged Timothy to remain. The simple Greek verb *menō* [3306] means "stay" or "remain," often used in the sense of "take up residence." But Paul chose *prosmenō* [4357], a more intense form meaning "wait" or "continue remaining." Furthermore, the Greek term for "urged" implies a strong exhortation.

Paul probably urged Timothy while they were together in Miletus, just before the apostle resumed his itinerary north to Troas and then over to Macedonia (see map, "Paul's Planned Farewell Tour," page 2). He apparently received word that Timothy struggled more than either of them had anticipated and so changed his travel plans to double back to Ephesus (see 3:14-15; 4:13).

Most church members would feel shocked to know how many times the thought of resigning crosses a pastor's mind, especially if he is serving a congregation in which encouragement is virtually nonexistent. Legitimate reasons exist for a shepherd to leave his post to go somewhere else, but a pastor usually brushes up his résumé in response to challenges that leave him feeling hopeless, unappreciated, and alone. Monday mornings can be especially difficult. Emotionally spent and lacking any tangible results in return for his best effort on Sunday, a pastor wonders if he really has anything worthwhile to offer.

Timothy had seen his share of hardship, having often traveled with Paul, and he had taken on tough assignments before; so the trouble in Ephesus must have been extraordinary. Nevertheless, Paul urged the embattled pastor to stay at his task.

Second, *communicate the truth* (1:3-4). Paul didn't expect Timothy to remain idle in Ephesus. He urged him to carry out his mission of teaching with even greater determination.

The NASB rendering "instruct" is perhaps too understated. "Command" or "order" better captures the authoritative nuance of the Greek verb. Paul expected the pastor to use his authority to forbid two specific distractions from the gospel: theological innovation and appealing to myths and genealogies for authority.

"Teach strange doctrines" translates the compound word *hetero* + $didaskale\bar{o}$ [2085], literally, "to teach something different" (cf. 6:3). Ephesus had long been the place where teachers established schools

"You Pray"

1 TIMOTHY 1:3-4

Sometimes a minister needs to recognize when the time has come to

In 1965, I accepted a call to be the senior pastor of a church in Waltham, Massachusetts. As if the cultural mismatch of two native move on. Texans in the land of Yankees didn't present challenge enough, my wife, Cynthia, could not adjust to the weather. To this day, she'll tell

you she didn't feel warm for two years. Now, I'm not one to run from a challenge, but the difficulties we

had adapting to ministry in New England made it clear that we were not serving in the right place. So, I put the word out that I was open to a change. In the meantime, we committed ourselves to the care of God's people in Waltham and left our future in the Lord's hands. We

stayed faithful "in season and out of season." Before long, I received an invitation to lead the congregation of

Irving Bible Church in the suburbs of sunny, much-warmer Dallas, Texas. Naturally, I wanted some certainty about the rightness of this move, so I said to Cynthia, "I'll need to pray about this." Without missing a beat, she replied, "You pray while I pack!"

and attracted students to their newly invented philosophical systems. No teaching in the church, however, should contradict prior revelation. For the Ephesians, that meant that no teaching should contradict the verbal instruction they received from men instructed by Jesus and commissioned to be His envoys (apostles). For us today, it means that no teaching should contradict Scripture, which includes the written record of the apostles' teaching.

The term translated "pay attention to" means "to devote thought or effort toward" something (cf. 4:13; Acts 16:14). It appears the Ephesians sought to link Christian teaching to myths and genealogies to give themselves an air of authority, rather than to stand confidently on God's Word alone.

Ancient cultures gave the greatest credence to that which was old. They created myths, stories that recount supposedly ancient events, for the purpose of explaining how or why people believe a certain thing. They used genealogies to link themselves to someone everyone respects in order to establish credibility or legitimacy.

Ultimately, Paul's command applies to everyone in ministry. Your discipline may be music, special needs, women's ministries, men's ministries, pulpit ministry, feeding and clothing the poor, or evangelism. Whatever your calling, wherever your ministry occurs, communicate the truth boldly, confidently standing on the authority of Scripture.

— 1:5 —

Third, *concentrate on the goal* (1:5). God gives us His Word and then clarifies the reason we are to stay at the task and communicate the truth: The goal is love. The motivation and the message from minister to congregation is love. When your people depart for home after your instruction, when they step out of the counseling room where you have discussed the realities of life, when they think back on that chance encounter or that lunch you scheduled, or whatever situation gave you an opportunity to impart truth, they will remember seeing love in action. Moreover, they will have seen it modeled and understand how to do the same for others.

The minister must not teach truth for the sake of being right or appearing intelligent. The Lord wants doctrinal purity, but not so that the church will be a repository of knowledge. Doctrinal purity cultivates a clean heart, a good conscience (1:5, 19; 3:9; cf. 4:2), and "unhypocritical" faith, which in turn produce love for God and love for others.

The verb translated "straying from" (*astocheō* [795]) means "miss the target," as in archery. Figuratively, it describes one's failure to accomplish what one intended. Certain men engaged in theological discussions that failed to produce either love or good works. Paul called such discussions "fruitless"—no better than empty prattle.

There's a time and place for splitting theological hairs. Men and women preparing for ministry, for example, should be encouraged to stretch their theological muscles in the academic gymnasium of seminary. There's nothing like a good seminary debate to work out the kinks in one's doctrine. A minister, however, must always rest his or her teaching on sound doctrine. And a pastor must always preach from solid exegesis toward practical application based on his intimate knowledge of the congregation's needs.

Practical application forbids "fruitless" or "empty" teaching.

Fourth, *remember the standard* (1:8-9, 11). All instruction must ultimately support the gospel, even when teaching on the Law of Moses. The syntactical construction of these verses and how they employ the phrase "according to the glorious gospel" suggests the good news is the baseline against which all teaching must be measured. In other words, the "sound teaching" at the end of verse 10 has the "glorious gospel" as its basis. Sound teaching builds upon the basic foundation—the norm, the standard—of the gospel.

Paul defends the Law as good and an expression of God's holy character, given to humanity for the purpose of redemption. God gave us the Law so we might measure ourselves against His righteous standard, find ourselves wanting, and then turn to Him for grace. No one can earn salvation by obeying the Law because all have failed. Therefore, the Law is intended for the lawless.

Those who have recognized their helplessness and have received God's free gift of eternal life through faith in His Son now have a different relationship with the Law. Believers are no longer "under" the Law—that is, subject to its condemnation—but now embrace the Law as a means of knowing God and seeking to please Him.

Ministry can be a terribly disillusioning, even confusing, vocation. I have counseled many individuals who were contemplating vocational

Christian service to test their calling with a simple question: "Will *any* other vocation potentially offer you reasonable fulfillment?" If so, I encourage them to pursue that before making any significant life changes in the direction of ministry.

On the other hand, I don't want to paint a bleak picture of ministry, especially that of a shepherd. If God has called you to serve as a pastor, then no other role will suffice. Any other position—regardless of pay, perks, power, or pomp—will prove only frustrating, and very quickly. To borrow from the old Peace Corps slogan, "It's the toughest job you'll ever love."

I have discovered that the best way for a pastor to avoid disillusionment and to cut through innumerable and endless distractions is to choose what he will lean upon and to whom he will listen. Those men who depend upon popularity for successful ministry and who listen to popular opinion doom themselves to disappointment and insecurity. Those who lean upon the Lord and listen to His Word may struggle and even suffer, but they remain focused on the target, persevere through difficulties, slice through distractions, and thrive on the challenge of ministry.

APPLICATION: 1 TIMOTHY 1:1-11

A Church for the Ages

The church is headed for a split. Not my church, and I hope not yours. I'm referring to *the* church. I see on one side a deeper commitment to tradition than to Scripture, and on the other a wholesale rejection of tradition—and with it, divine truth. And postmodernism is the blade that would make the final cut.

Postmodernism is a worldview that rejects the existence of objective truth, or at least doubts our ability to know anything for certain. It is an insidious philosophy that—among many other failings—leads to an ethic of pragmatism, determining right from wrong based on the immediate needs of the majority. Consequently, churches have redefined success, becoming less concerned with such intangible factors as spiritual maturity or congregational unity, and obsessing over programs that "work" and finding ways to "meet needs." I am grieved to see church-growth gurus elevating their own status by offering innovative

From My Journal

Watch Your Target!

1 TIMOTHY 1:5

After several weeks of rugged physical training, close-order drill (marching), and "snapping in," our Marine Corps drill instructor finally led us to the rifle range. He had us lie down in the dirt with our rifles and look downrange at markers set at 200 yards, 300 yards, and ultimately 500 yards out. Then the captain of the rifle range yelled three words over the PA system, "Watch your targets!" And up they'd come, followed by the random cracks of rifle fire all around. All the while, the captain kept repeating, "Watch your targets!

Watch your targets!" which might seem an obvious command. We came for target practice, after all. But if you've never experienced a firing range, the distractions can overwhelm you at first. I had to repeat the captain's three-word command in order to keep my mind

Every once in a while those words come back to me. I still hear focused on the target. them in my head. And they're right out of 1 Timothy 1:5. Watch your target! Love from a pure heart. Love from a good conscience. Love from an unhypocritical faith. Watch your target!