

ABIDE: A BIBLE READING CHALLENGE

JOURNEY THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT

ORDER IN THE CHURCH

1 TIMOTHY

If people really knew what it takes to be a pastor or leader in the church, if people really understood what God requires of His leaders, many new church startups today wouldn't dare come near the heat that is demanded of God's men. This little letter to Paul's protégé, Timothy, is one that tests the character fibers that are required to bind a man to the ministry, and the church he leads to God's truth. Ministry is a wonderful thing, but it is a fearful thing. It must be guarded. It must be cared for in a cautious and meticulous way. Like the tightrope walker— like the lion tamer— like the engineering inspector, each paying the greatest attention to their job task so they can take care of themselves and those around them, the man of God carefully weighs the congregation and himself against the scale of Scripture with the greatest amount of attention given.

Now, to be fair, this is not all you'll find here. Inside of the warnings and instructions given to young Timothy, you will hear hearts groaning as a spiritual father speaks to his spiritual son.

It was on Paul's second missionary journey that Paul had the pleasure of leading young Timothy to Christ. When God gives you the privilege of leading a soul to Christ, your hearts are bound. And from Acts 16, when Paul visited the city of Lystra, that is exactly what had happened. Not only this, but later on Paul had received word that this young convert was really showing potential as a Bible teacher and servant of God. So Paul doesn't waste any time— Paul asked Timothy if he would like to take a missionary journey with him.

This was the start of a lifelong admiration and love for one another.

This means that when you read this letter and you're looking at all of the warnings, and all of the rules, commands, and advice, know that these demands are never far away from a heart of love at the same time. The problems mentioned in this letter are far greater than a "Hey, you can do it, kiddo..." would suffice. Timothy was in trouble, and Paul was determined to see him through it.

Paul is believed to be in the City of Colossea at this point, and Timothy had stayed behind to become the pastor of the Church of Ephesus. This had to have been exciting at first. But the luster began to wear away as several problems began mounting quickly.

This can be seen clearly in the key verse for this entire letter:

1 Timothy 3:15, “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

Paul said that if he wasn't able to make it, Timothy should know that every church needed to understand how to behave and conduct themselves. When the local church conducts its affairs, there is a calculated, worshipful, and right way to do things, because it is this very institution that God deemed to be the guardian of His truth. In fact, it is the pillar, and the foundation. What the support beams and foundations do in terms of keeping a structure together, the church does in terms of keeping a society together through the pure teaching of the word.

How to Think About 1 Timothy

The Church Has A Set Message (1 Timothy 1)— After the introduction Paul gets right into how to protect the integrity of the information that is taught to the congregation.

Teach Sound Doctrine (Chapter 1:3-11): Verse 3, “As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,” Also in verse 10 Paul says that nothing should be taught other than ‘sound doctrine’. The word ‘sound’ is the translated form of Greek from which we get our word “Hygiene.” Paul was making sure that Timothy and everyone else understood that the only healthy teaching is the teaching of God's Word.

Proclaim the Gospel (Chapter 1:12-17): Paul is describing his thankfulness that God would save him. He never got over that (none of us should). What shocked him even more is the fact that God called Him to preach, and so in his estimation, Christ was to be unceasingly exalted by telling all that Jesus can do the same for everyone else.

Defend the Faith (Chapter 1:18-20): Here is Paul's command, Verse 18, “This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.” Strong language. It must be, though. There is a reality upon which your eyes must fasten themselves. There is a direction that must hold and keep your gaze. This reality and direction is the fact that we are at war. You're a soldier, peering onto the battlefield, and this battle is like none you've ever known. Your objective is to take the enemy over to your side— the side of Christ. So war with good warfare.

The Church Has A Special Membership (1 Timothy 2-3)— You should be able to identify the quality of a true membership by identifying the special features that separate it from any other institution on earth.

Members Who Pray (2:1-8): The way a church puts a priority on prayer separates it from any other gathering. We pray for everyone. We pray for all authority over us, the neighbor next to us, and for our lives in general for the specific purpose that we would become more godly, and others come to know Christ. This is the great need, and therefore this is the great focus.

Wives Who Submit (2:9-15): This is the one that causes cringing in our day. And it doesn't just make us cringe, but has since been a shamed teaching, and wholly ignored by many. This will continue to happen as long as there is unbiblical understanding of this passage and a sinful application that comes along with it. We need to understand that submission is not domination. It's a matter of order of leadership and spiritual headship and accountability. God's churches are an example to the world, and by our example, others should see progress. The world should see that this whole leadership problem has been solved by Scripture. There is no longer a strife, but a holy surrender.

Leaders Who Excel (3:1-13): This list is absolutely terrifying. There is nothing on this list that God doesn't require for any other Christian, but it's the fact that these qualities are all together in one place and are to

describe a certain kind of person. A person who desires spiritual leaders must be known to possess these qualities before an ever watching and scrutinizing public. They must excel in character, or they are to be disqualified from this office, plain and simple.

Christians Who Obey (3:14-16): A mature Christian congregation knows how to defend truth. They don't tolerate non-truth; they can't. They know that the way they behave speaks to what they claim, and what they claim speaks to the world.

The Church Has A Specific Man (1 Timothy 4)— We don't gather for the sake of gathering. We don't listen to preaching for the sake of listening to preaching. As we engage in every act of worship together, we do so because people have a nasty habit— an impulsive habit— of believing things that are simply not true. They like to come up with their own standards. They like to make their own rules. So what did God give to help preach to a world captured by their own desires? He gave them a preacher.

A Man Who Preaches with the Word (4:1-6): "Preach the Word" are Paul's words to Timothy, but they have been the clarion call to all of God's preachers through all generations. We don't preach what other people think. We don't preach what is convenient or easy to consume. A church should have a man before them that can take God's Word and say exactly what God says.

A Man Who Preaches with His Life (4:7-12): Preaching is not enough. People need to see that you actually live what you preach. A church should have a man behind the pulpit that is the exact same as the man who is behind closed doors. The church should have a man who can stand before them as well as walk before them. The message must match the man.

A Man Who Preaches with His Progress (4:13-16): The church should have a specific man who can be observed as becoming better and better at his job. This includes everything. You should see progress in the pulpit, in his home life, in his finances, in his holiness. This man should continually be getting better and better, and aided by his congregation to do so.

The Church Has A Sanctified Ministry (1 Timothy 5-6)— It should not come as a surprise for us to hear and understand that the people who make up any particular church congregation are to be a people who are set apart from the rest of the world. We should pay attention to people and pay attention to ourselves in a very intentional way.

The People of God (5:-6:2): This section deals with how a church should treat widows, elders, their pastor, and those over them in the workplace. As Christians, we don't discredit or discount any social status, and we should be constantly on the lookout for how we treat other people.

The Peril of Money (6:3- 6:10): People need to be constantly warned about the danger of trying to live a life like everyone else (or at least how they perceive them to live). Too much compromise can come because we compare ourselves to others, and when you live like this, there is seemingly one solution, "I need more money."

The Purpose of Life (6:11-21): Verse 11, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love patience, meekness." This is the purpose of life the preacher should strive to have, and this is the life that he should teach his congregation. Our lives are too short and too insignificant to be lived for ourselves. Use your time to serve the eternal God.

What to Look for in 1 Timothy

Key Words— There are certain words Paul uses that continually highlight the focus of this book.

Faith— This word or a variation of this word is mentioned 20 times.

Godliness— This word occurs 9 times during the course of this letter.

Charge—This word is used 7 times and is used as a strong command attached to the instruction given.

Preach— This is how the information would be disseminated to the congregation. God's man is to preach. 4 times Paul tells Timothy to make sure that he preaches to the people.

Doctrine— This word has to do with what is taught in the church. You will see this word 3 times in this letter.

What to Gain from 1 Timothy

The Church Must Be Led With Care— This was stated earlier, but the structure is only as good as the foundation it rests upon; and it really doesn't take long for an error, miscalculation, or an area of neglect to become dangerous for the entire structure.

So it is with God's church. This is the institution, the information hub, where people are fed correction, insight, philosophical thoughts for world view, encouragement, and Gospel-minded endeavors to be used to guide not only our lives, but the lives of the surrounding culture. You can see then why the church must be led in a careful, and in every sense of the word, intentional way.

If there is no voice that calls out to the culture, and if there is nothing guiding God's people, the pillar and ground become shaken, and just like Samson with the Philistines, the whole place comes crashing down along with everyone inside, except God's people are taken down along with everyone else.

A church may have programs, activities for people of all ages, comfortable buildings in which they can learn, but if the leadership falters against the only standard by which God has given, then the entire structure is in danger.

The Pastor Must Be Marked By Integrity— Careful leadership only comes by way of a careful man. A man that is as consistent as they come. In his personal life and his public life. He is the same in the light as he is in the dark.

Without this standard of integrity, God's people really are in danger. With so many personalities in one location, a world that is subject to violent philosophical change at a moment's notice, and with the continual pressures of life and temptations, the last thing a church needs is a man that can be swayed by every ripple that washes up against him. The pastor must be consistent, accountable, and easy to inspect.

This is not an admonition to be critical of this man, but it is a caution that a lack of integrity will eventually leak its way out into the congregation.



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