

1 Timothy

Who, When, Where

Written by Paulus (Paul). Paulus was originally a fanatical Pharisee, persecuting, imprisoning, and even killing Christians for teaching what he thought was heresy; that Yeshua was the Anointed, (The Jewish Messiah). After meeting Yeshua in a miraculous way on the road to Damascus, Paulus became not just a Christian but one of Christianity's most fervent preachers and teachers. He spent most of his life as an itinerant missionary, with all the perils that that brought with it, to the towns and cities which lay along the route between Jerusalem and Rome. Paulus died in Rome somewhere in the 60'sAD, and wrote most of the letters which we have in the New Testament.

Acts 20 starts with Paulus heading from Ephesus to Macedonia. But later in the chapter Loukas already mentions elders in Ephesus. Were these the elders Timotheos just appointed? Or did Timotheos appointed new elders later on, to sort out some false teaching and bad practices?

We think this letter was written in the early to mid 60's AD.

Timotheos was in Ephesus, but Paulus had gone off to Macedonia.

Summary

Timotheos was mentioned in Acts 16 when Paulus first met him in Lystra. He followed Paulus around on his missionary journeys. Paulus was now leaving Timotheos on his own to look after a church they had planted in Ephesus. And to appoint leaders there who would then take over.

This is the letter he wrote to Timotheos, kind of an encouraging job description, so he would know what to do.

Before You Read

If you were writing a letter to a young man you had disciplined, and he was just starting out in his own ministry... what would you say?

What would you say to your own son who was about to take over from you?

What do you wish someone had said to you when you were just starting out yourself?

Do you find yourself spending hours arguing with people about things? In an effort to help them discover the truth.

Do you ever wonder if it's worth it with some people?

Who is the worst sinner you know?

How do you compare with them?

Key Verses

1 Timothy 1:4

... nor to pay attention to stories and to endless genealogies which give rise to meaningless questions, rather than the stewardship of God in faith.

You can go around in circles arguing with some people.

To my mind, if the other person is completely closed to the truth, or at least, closed to being persuaded that they might be wrong... then you're wasting your time arguing with them and you may as well just walk away.

When someone is going on about some pointless argument, try to step back a bit and see the bigger picture rather than the minute detail they're arguing about. And ask a question about that bigger picture.

Take control of the debate and take it up a level to make it worth discussing.

1 Timothy 1:6-7

... some, having missed the mark, have turned aside to idle talk, wanting to be teachers of the laws, not thinking through either the things they say, or concerning anything which they're asserting

I've seen several, "so called" teachers in my time who really had no business teaching anyone.

Proverbs 17 says, "Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is counted wise. When he shuts his lips, he is thought to be discerning."

Some people only open their mouths to show their ignorance.

Listen to what others are saying. Listen to what it is telling you about them.

Be willing to be the last to speak. After you have had time to consider your words.

Proverbs 18 says, "He who pleads his cause first seems right; until another comes and questions him." Be willing to be the another. Don't rush to be the first.

1 Timothy 1:9-10

... the law wasn't laid down for the righteous, but for the lawless, and the insubordinate, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, and for murderers, for fornicators, for homosexuals, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there's anything else which is opposing sound teaching...

The law isn't so you can show God that you're righteous. It's so God can show you that you're not.

It's job is to convict sinners. Nobody has ever been saved by the Law. It's only purpose is to make you realise that you need a saviour.

How do you use it? To judge others?

In that case, you need to stop applying it to others and start applying it to yourself.

1 Timothy 1:15

This saying is trustworthy, and worthy of all acceptance, "Anointed Yeshua came into the world to save sinners, of whom I'm the foremost."

This verse is often misquoted. Paulus isn't saying that he is the worst sinner ever...

It's a saying, a proverb. It's something we should all say... "I am the foremost sinner."

If I said, "Here's a good saying, 'Don't count your lucky chickens'", you wouldn't think I'm saying that I'm a chicken. Would you? It just means I think that's a good saying. And that's what Paulus meant too. It's a good saying, it's true, it's worth accepting.

1 Timothy 2:1-2

I urge then, above all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made on behalf of all people, and for kings, and for all those in authority, so that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, in all devoutness and dignity.

You can tell a lot about a person by what they pray for.

What can we tell about you?

One of the internet memes recently has been "First world problems." Like, "don't you hate it when the cord to charge your phone is just a few cm's short to reach the table next to your bed." There are people with real problems out there. But we get so caught up in the drama of our own lives.

When was the last time that you prayed, really prayed, for the political leaders of your country?

Why is that?

Do you think the first world church has become complacent and self centred?

1 Timothy 2:9-10

Similarly, the women also, to adorn themselves in moderate attire, with modesty and sensibility, not with braids, or gold, or pearls, or expensive garments, but with good works, which is fitting for women proclaiming service to God.

Some Christians have gone way overboard on this one in the past. Probably well intentioned. But there are no rules for Christians, so we shouldn't make this into one ... especially if we're doing that so we can judge and condemn others.

Dress moderately with modesty. That sounds like a good principle. Adorn yourself with good works not gold and jewels.

Christians aren't about image, we aren't about fitting in with the way the world does things. We're about the inner person, not the outer image.

1 Timothy 2:11-12

Let a woman learn in quietness, and all submission. I don't permit a woman to teach, or to be domineering over a man, but to be in quietness,

Let's not avoid the controversy on this.

Paulus gives his reasons in the next few verses. It is to do with the order of creation. It is not cultural. He is not saying that men are more important than women, or better than women, or more capable than women. He is saying Adam was formed first, then Eve. So women should be quiet and submissive.

I think especially in churches, the adventurous warrior spirit of men is often driven out of them by mistaking meekness for weakness. Christian men should be strong. Not bullies. But strong, loving, honourable men. Who do not back away from a spiritual fight when it is required.

Sadly I have seen way too many weak willed Christian men dominated by manipulative and domineering women who have no understanding of what being a godly woman even means. They take advantage of their husbands who also should know that they are poor examples themselves.

(And to be fair, I have seen some men who confuse submission with obedience and expect their wives to wait on them hand and foot like a slave. Who treat their wives like doormats. They are just bullies who justify their ignorance with a few words quoted from a book they never read and definitely never understood.)

1 Timothy 3:2-7

A watchman has to be above reproach, the husband of one woman, sober, sensible, well behaved, hospitable, good at teaching, not given to wine, not a brawler, not greedy for gain, but fair, not contentious, not a lover of money, leading his own household well, having children in submission with all dignity ... And they must also have a good testimony from the outside...

That's quite a list. The role of watchman, or elder or whatever they're called in your church, is very important. If they mess up many people can be hurt and the reputation of the church could be dragged down.

Do you think you qualify?

Can you name 12 people you know who do?

Did Paulus?

He wasn't married. He didn't have any children.

Did Timothy? Clearly not, but he was sent by Paulus to appoint watchmen!

So clearly this was a checklist that you have to score 100 points on to be a watchman. It's not a rule. It's laying out the principles of who should be a leader; (and who shouldn't). If you want to be a leader but these things don't describe you... maybe you should wait a while.

Paulus is saying, you really shouldn't be a leader until you have shown that you can lead. Like the way you brought up your children for example. That they turned out well. That you have a good reputation in the community for the things you do and the way you are. When your children have grown up and you have proven yourself... then maybe you will be leadership material.

But before then? ... probably not, no matter how gifted you are. Use your gift, but let others lead.

1 Timothy 3:8

Servants similarly...

Servants, deacons (which is just Greek for servant), or whatever you call them in your church... should be outstanding people. Godly men.

Does your church examine the lives of those who serve? Or is it just so grateful that someone is willing to do things that they take anyone?

Do you think that's right? Is it what Paulus is saying here?

1 Timothy 3:11

Their wives similarly...

If you are in a position of leadership your wife will have a lot of influence on your church. As much as you love her, if she's not a godly woman, then you need to step down.

1 Timothy 3:14-15

I'm writing these things to you, expecting to come to you soon, but so that if I'm delayed, you may know how you must dwell in the household of God, which is the assembly of the living God, a pillar and foundation of the truth.

Not just for Timotheos. This is also so we can know how to dwell in the household of God.

As you read keep an eye out for things you might not have realised were required of you. BTW: does this verse give you the impression that Paulus knew God's will 100%? Or that he was being given detailed instructions by the holy spirit on where to go and when? And that once decided, it would definitely happen?

1 Timothy 4:1

But the spirit specifically says, that in the later times some will withdraw from the faith, paying attention to seducing spirits and to the teachings of demons

That's full on. It seems to be happening.

How can we protect ourselves from being seduced by false teaching? How can we know if we have been? From the context of the next few verses, it seems that false teachers impose restrictive rules about marriage, and diet. But true teachers impose no rules at all.

1 Timothy 4:7

Have nothing to do with the profane, or with old women's stories.

It is so easy to get caught up in this kind of gossip and fantasy. But it's also easy to get caught up trying to argue against it. Both are a waste of time.

1 Timothy 4:12

Become a model for the faithful, in message, in behaviour, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Nuf said. Are you?

1 Timothy 5:1-2

Don't chastise an elderly man, but entreat him like a father; younger men like brothers; elderly women like mothers; younger women like sisters in all purity.

I see so much anger and hatred to others these days. Even in the church.

Even if someone is totally wrong. Be polite. Be respectful. Treat each other nicely. Would you speak to your own mother or father like that? Would you behave like that with your own sister? If you wouldn't then you shouldn't behave like that with any woman.

1 Timothy 5:13

And at the same time, they seem to be idle, going about from house to house. And not only idle, but also babblers and busybodies, saying things they shouldn't.

This is a kind of play on words. Instead of being usefully occupied, being "busy bodies", the become idle and gossip, becoming "busybodies". Which are you? To be honest, from what I've seen over the years. Most church splits start with gossip. Don't be the one who spreads that.

1 Timothy 5:19-20

Don't concur with an accusation against an elder, except if there are more than two or three witnesses. Expose those who sin in front of everyone, so that the rest will have fear.

We tend to get both these wrong. We spread rumour and gossip without proof. Damaging lives and reputations. Especially if it's about our leaders, we need to believe it out before we even accept it, let alone before we repeat it. Treat it as literally unbelievable unless the person telling us has proof. Take them to the person they're accusing and sort it out. Don't be a coward. And we cover up sin when we do have proof. (For the sake of the church). But this has led to mountains of pain and suffering as offenders repeat their sin elsewhere. Expose the sin. Allow repentance. Bring change.

1 Timothy 6:4

... but has an unhealthy interest in meaningless questions and wars of words, which result in envy, strife, speaking evil, wicked suspicions, and violent contentions between people of minds which have been corrupted, having been robbed of the truth, presuming that devoutness is the means of gain. Stay away from such people.

Stay away. Don't try to argue with them. You'll get caught up. Their lifestyle will reveal them for who they are. Let your's reveal who you are.

1 Timothy 6:6-7

But devoutness with contentment is a means of great gain. For we didn't carry anything into the world, and it's evident that we're also not able to carry anything out.

It's easy to think that you should have devoutness and wealth. Right?

You cannot serve God and money. So let's just ask for God's help to be content with just devoutness. And let him worry about what we will wear, and eat, and where we will live.

1 Timothy 6:9

those intending to be rich fall into a trial and a trap, and into many foolish and harmful desires which sink those people into complete ruin and destruction.

If God makes you wealthy there is nothing wrong with that. If he doesn't, then don't wear yourself out trying to change that. He is saving you from a trap. He is saving you from ruin and destruction. Be content.

After You Read

What verses really stood out to you?

How would you summarize this book in a sentence or two? What is it about? What is God trying to say to us?

Is there anyone you can encourage and help along the way by writing them a letter like this?

What about writing yourself a letter, based on your own knowledge about your strengths and weaknesses?

Are any of the things you spend hours on, actually wasting your time? Time that could be spent more effectively elsewhere? What is the bigger picture question you should be asking instead?

Are you rich? How do you measure that? Compared to the other 8 billion people on the planet. If you're reading this on your own computer then you're probably in the top 1-2%. How are you using your wealth for the kingdom of God?