

"I TIMOTHY, WALK THRU THE BIBLE."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

October 11, 2026, 6:00 pm

Text for Sermon: I Timothy 1:1-4, 15-17; 2:5-6; 3:14-15; 4:12, 16; 6:11-12

Timothy

In Acts 16 we read about Paul's second missionary journey through Asia Minor, south central Turkey.

Acts 16:1-4 Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4 As they went on their way through the cities.

From II Timothy we learn of his upbringing.

II Timothy 1:5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.

II Timothy 3:15 How from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings,

These two women were undoubtedly influential in Timothy's own conversion to Christianity.

Timothy became as a son to Paul, certainly a spiritual son. He was one of Paul's closest friends and disciples for the rest of Paul's ministry.

Timothy was God's grace to Paul giving him the gift of a companion, friend, and faithful helper in ministry after he had parted ways with

Barnabas. He became one of Paul's closest friends and most faithful fellow laborers.

1 Corinthians 4:17 I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.

Philippians 2:19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you.

1 Thessalonians 3:2 We sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith.

I Timothy 1:3 As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine.

Remember Paul planted the church in Ephesus, he stayed there three years. He knows this church and its people better than any other.

So this is Paul's letter to the young pastor of the church he planted. This is a spiritual father writing a spiritual son, a true child of faith.

Book

We go from the first two letters written by Paul, I and II Thessalonians, to the very last letters written by Paul. Most likely from prison in Roman where he awaited execution.

I Timothy is the first personal letter by Paul written to one individual and not to a church. We look over the shoulder so to speak and read some personal correspondence between an apostle and his disciple, a mentor and mentee. How can this be relevant to us? Why is this in the Bible?

Let me read some short phrases from I Timothy and you tell me, is this still relevant to us?

Don't get caught up in vain discussions, endless speculations, silly myths, old wives tales.

Keep a pure heart, a good conscience, a sincere faith.

Pray for those in authority.

Here are the qualifications for elders and deacons.

Set an example in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity.

Keep watch on your life and doctrine.

Godliness with contentment is great gain.

Money is a root of all evil.

This is the pastoral wisdom of a godly older saint to a younger Christian.

Yes, we need it.

Remember the admonition of Paul:

II Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

I Timothy begins a mini-section in Paul's letters called the Pastoral Epistles, I and II Timothy, and Titus. Personal letters from Paul to specific real people, leaders in churches that Paul has raised up, Timothy in Ephesus and Titus in Crete.

We have to be careful in calling them Pastoral Epistles, not to imply there are not pastoral elements in Paul's other letters. But these three do address pastoral leadership issues.

Purpose, theme

Paul's letters can be arranged in three groups, early, middle and late.

The early ones are Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians and Romans. They clearly outline the Gospel, salvation/redemption, faith, morality and order in worship. They are foundational.

The middle ones are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon. They present the cosmic Christ along with the fullness of life that is in Him.

The later ones are Timothy and Titus. They set the stage for the ongoing life of the church for centuries to come. They address the principal needs and concerns of the growing and spreading international community/church.

This is the clear work of the Holy Spirit overseeing the Church of Jesus Christ and preparing the church to function well for centuries to come.

So that “you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God (I Timothy 3:15).

I Timothy gives us the most explicit and complete instructions in the entire Bible for life in the local church and for the leadership and organization. Paul instructs Timothy on appropriate conduct in worship gatherings, the qualifications of elders and deacons, and the proper order of church discipline. He exhorts Timothy on the priorities of public worship, prayer, preaching, caring for members, roles of men and women, godliness and contentment.

In I Timothy we have the longest description in the NT of the qualifications for being an elder, and the only explicit description in the NT of the qualifications for deacons (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

Paul's specific directives to Timothy contain much practical advice on how a church leader is to function. 1 Timothy explains for us the *heart* of a pastor, the *qualifications* of a pastor, the *duties* of a pastor, and the *goals* of a pastor.

Paul urges Timothy to ***watch his life*** and ***watch his doctrine*** closely. What Paul says applies not only to pastors and elders and church leaders but to all Christians.

Watch your life.

I Timothy 1:5 The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

I Timothy 1:18-19 This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, *that by them you may wage the good warfare*, 19 holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith.

I Timothy 4:7b-8 Rather train yourself for *godliness*; 8 for while bodily training is of some value, *godliness* is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

I Timothy 4:12, 15-16 Let no one despise you for your youth, but *set the believers an example* in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. ... 15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

I Timothy 6:11-12, 14 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, *godliness*, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. 12 *Fight the good fight of the faith*. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ... 14 keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ

Twice Paul says fight the good fight. Twice he urges godliness. Twice he says keep a good conscience, twice he pleads for purity. Pursue these things, watch your life closely.

Watch your doctrine.

Paul gives at least four warnings about not getting caught up in vain discussions, endless speculations, silly myths, old wives tales.

I Timothy 1:3-7 As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any

different doctrine, 4 nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. ... 6 Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, 7 desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

I Timothy 4:7 Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths.

I Timothy 6:3-5 If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, 4 he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, 5 and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

I Timothy 6:20-21 O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,” 21 for by professing it some have swerved from the faith.

Every time I read these passages my mind goes to the endless controversies that swirl around us every day. Controversies about end-times, Israel, UFOs, conspiracy theories, far left and far right conspiracies, QAnon, the Illuminati, who killed JFK, who actually bombed the Twin Towers, where Covid came from. This is nothing new.

One of the perennial heresies confronted the early church was Gnosticism. Gnosticism was the belief that only a few, an elite, a privileged few are able to have inside information. Ancient Gnostics believed in one way or another this particular secret knowledge was the key to salvation or illumination, or whatever would be the promise of this particular information.

Christians don't have secret beliefs we hide from the world. We're not saved because we have come to some secret knowledge.

I Peter 1:16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

Don't engage foolish controversies. You should know by now when you do those who hold these silly myths are impervious to logic. Any evidence you bring against them is just further proof of the conspiracy.

Amid an insane world, Christians should go about their business in peace with a confident joy that God is always working for our good. Do not be afraid. Do not spread fear. Christ has overcome the world.

Spend your time considering sound doctrine, what you know to be true instead of worrying about who's up to something out there. Stay away from controversies, promote the Gospel and protect sound doctrine. Defend what you know to be the truth.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ in two verses.

I Timothy 1:15-16 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

You can share this with anyone in a couple of minutes. And what makes this especially powerful is how personal and real it is. It's not just pointing the finger at someone else saying you must be saved. It is saying I can testify from personal experience that I was dead in my sins and on my way to hell, the worst of sinners, and Jesus came into my life and saved me and forgave my sins and turned my life around.

Paul declared himself to be the world's worst sinner. Is that hyperbole? Or is that apostolic self-deprecation? Or is that true? Was Paul really the world's worst sinner? He says, "Christ Jesus

came into the world to save sinners,” and among that group, “I am the foremost.”

When Paul considered all that he was sinning against, and that his blasphemy and his persecution were in the face of all that truth and beauty, the insolence, the arrogance, the pride of his own heart was so terrible in his eyes that he pronounced himself the foremost.

God would see to it that Paul realized this, felt this about his own arrogant heart. “You, Paul, are the least deserving of my mercy. So I’m going to save you, so that when you write 1 Timothy, no one will ever be able to say, ‘I am too undeserving.’” (John Piper)

The best testimony is always personal, from the heart. It is always better when we see the log in our own eye before we talk about the speck in someone else’s eye.

You should know from firsthand experience and knowledge that you are the worst of sinners. From long history and intimate knowledge of my sin, I can testify I am the worst sinner in the room. And I have received mercy and abounding grace. I can testify to the Gospel.

How many of us engage in more fruitful discussions of things close to home, personal matters, points of growth, challenges of our faith?

1 Timothy 6:11-12 But as for you. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.