

A Study of First Timothy

Week Two

1 Timothy 2:8-3:16

Day One

8 I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. 9 I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, 10 but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. 11 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.

v. 8 – **Did you ever notice that churches and believers can be angry?** What’s more, I have found an interesting dynamic that the more Bible someone knows, the more they can dispute with others concerning ethics, interpretation and application. Why is that? I think man is basically a religious being, but not necessarily spiritual. We love to try and figure God out, so to speak. When we do, we want everyone else to see what we see and think like we think. When that doesn’t happen, we can try to argue to make it happen and get angry when it doesn’t happen after our best efforts.

Are you angry? Do you spend any time at all disputing with others? I am not saying you should not hold your beliefs firmly nor should you refrain from sharing them with others. You should do it in the Spirit of Christ. That will enable you to lift up holy hands and pray. Anger and disputes hinder your prayer life, since you are unable to be a vessel to bless those whom God wants to bless, people whom you may not want to bless.

vs. 9&10 – Did Paul forbid women to wear jewelry or dress in fine clothes? Is that what he was trying to say here? One key you can use to interpret Scripture is to look at *everything* that the Bible has to say on a particular subject. When we look at this topic of woman and how they adorn themselves, there isn’t much else to look at. When that’s the case, it is best *not* to develop too much doctrine from something that is only mentioned once.

The context here seems to be that Paul wanted female believers to focus on their inner being and not just their external looks. That is consistent with what Jesus said:

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:28-34).

Where is your emphasis, whether a man or woman? Are you more concerned about outer appearance than inner reality?

v. 11 – Paul wanted woman to have a quiet spirit, which would enable them to learn and grow. Why was this important? Because woman are generally more open to spiritual things, since they are more intuitive. They must be more careful, therefore, not to begin to influence others before they are well-grounded in the truth and how to handle it.

Day Two

12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. 15 But women will be saved through childbearing — if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

v. 12 – Now we face a difficult verse, one which has been taken literally by many in church history. What was Paul referring to here? Is a woman absolutely forbidden to teach a man or to hold a position of authority in the church? As I mentioned yesterday, it is important not to build a doctrine from one verse or passage. What else does the Bible have to say about women in ministry?

It seems that there is no prohibition in other places. For instance, Paul said that *anyone* who had a spiritual gift should use it. He said that all received spiritual gifts, and didn't say that only men with gifts should exercise them.

It is hard for me *not* to see some cultural bias in what Paul said here, for it was not allowed throughout the Roman Empire for woman to speak in public or teach. I don't think Paul wanted to subject the women in the church or the Church itself to the cultural pressure that would result from women taking public roles.

My own personal philosophy is that my job is to help people identify their gifts and assist them to express them. If a woman has a teaching gift, she has it because God gave it to her. If God saw fit to give a woman a public gift, then who am I to oppose it or her? I do think, however, that women need to be protected by the Church as they express their gift. I don't think the Church should ask them to suppress their God-given gifts just because those gifts may make some men uncomfortable.

vs. 13&14 – In all my international travels since 1989, I have seen many capable women, who were the backbone of the churches where they ministered. They were submissive to their church leadership and husbands (when married). As stated above, I think women are more spiritually sensitive than men, which makes them vulnerable. That doesn't mean, however, that we should just tell a woman not to minister because she may be more easily deceived. I think that means we should take careful steps to protect our women as they minister, not prevent them from ministering.

v. 15 – Sorry, this cannot mean that childbearing is the only way that woman can be made holy. If that’s true, are you telling me that Anna was an unholy woman since she probably had no children? That doesn’t make sense. Who was Anna? Let’s look:

There was also a prophetess, Anna , the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying (Luke 2:36-37).

What about women who cannot have children? According to this verse, are they shut out of holy living? That’s nonsense. I do think it means that women must honor and recognize that they have a unique position in God’s creation to bear children. While men can and do walk away from their responsibilities to raise and care for their children, a woman cannot do so (I’m not saying it is right for men to do so; I’m just saying that they do it, all the time.) Women are the life givers in more ways than one and they must never deny this critical, God-given role.

How do you feel about women in ministry? There are even some women who are biased against other women who take on a public or teaching role. I don’t know how the Church can carry out its mission while only utilizing the gifts in half their members (the men). What can you do to encourage and release women into their God-given purpose? Do you agree with me on this issue or not?

Day Three

3:1 Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.

v. 1—I have always thought that this verse endorsed ambition in the church. Let me explain. Paul wrote that if someone *wants* to be a leader in the church, they wish for a good thing; he doesn’t condemn them for being ambitious. They must, however, be willing to pay the price to serve in that capacity. So ambition is good, as long as you become a leader in a manner that is pleasing to God.

What is your heart set to do? I set my heart many years ago to teach, travel, advise, consult and write. Today I am doing all those things. I have some measure of success doing them, I believe, for two reasons. One is God’s grace. The second is that I have been willing to pay the price to do them well. What price are you willing to pay to fulfill your heart’s desire?

v. 2 – Paul went on to outline the price that a leader must pay to be an effective overseer, bishop or elder, depending on which term you are comfortable with. The first is that he must not be a polygamist. That sounds like a strange prohibition today, but it was an

important issue then. This tells me that there are cultural issues of the day that are important for a leader to take into consideration.

For instance, if Paul had written today, he could have stipulated that no man could serve in leadership if he had been divorced more than once. I'm not taking a stand for or against divorce by writing that, I'm making the point that multiple divorces would have been unheard of in Paul's day, but polygamy was not. Today polygamy is almost unheard of but divorce is commonplace. I think ever church and denomination, therefore, has the right to think through the requirements for leadership that are appropriate to the times in which they minister.

Another example is training. There were no Bible schools in Paul's day. There are some today who don't think that formal training is required because it's not mentioned in the Bible. Of course it's not mentioned—it didn't exist! Does that mean that no leader should consider formal training today? That would be absurd! A church may decide that formal training isn't necessary, but that is their decision. They should not draw on biblical precedent for that decision because Paul would never have considered that an option any more than travel to the moon.

v. 3 – I am a believer in formal training for church leaders. That, however, isn't the foundation upon which their ministry is based. Ministry has been and must always be based on excellence of character. That is why a man (or woman) must be mature in the Lord in order to lead.

I was just on cruise where a young woman encountered a tragedy that led her to Christ. Five years later, she has written several books and is "on the circuit" teaching, using her testimony to open the door, so to speak. Her testimony is powerful but she isn't ready to teach. She isn't mature enough in the Lord to be teaching God's people in my opinion. She has many good things to say and I think God is using and will continue to use her mightily. There is no substitute, however, for some gray hair in ministry. And gray hair comes from living long enough to earn it.

v. 4 – It is important that a leader have the respect of his or her family, but what happens when that isn't possible or doesn't happen? Should a leader step down if a child is rebellious? If a spouse refuses to cooperate with the call on his or her partner's life? These aren't easy questions and there are no easy answers. I simply appeal that these verses be used as guidelines and not legalistic restrictions that refuse to judge each case on its own merits. Do you agree with me? Why or why not?

Day Four

5(If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. 8 Deacons, likewise, are to be

men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.

v. 5—Paul makes a good point (Paul made a lot of good points on a regular basis). Ministry car, unfortunately, put the entire family under intense pressure. When I was a pastor, people put subtle and not-so-subtle pressure on my family to behave in a certain way. There was some pressure on me to insure that they behaved well and met other's expectations so that it would not reflect badly on me. Anyone else's children could not go to the meeting and no one would ask where they were. If mine weren't there, people wondered where they were and some were concerned that it set a bad example.

At some point, I decided to shield my family from those pressures as much as possible. I wanted them to do things because they *wanted* to do them (better yet, because God wanted them to do them). I didn't want to perform to make me look good or to keep others happy.

I have known many men who pressured their families to do certain things so it would reflect well on the husband and father in ministry. I don't think that's managing a family, that's manipulating them for questionable reasons. I am interested in how a leader manages his family based on the reality of where each member is, free from the expectations of elders, deacons and the little old ladies of the church.

v. 6—Yesterday I raised the issue of the new believer who is on the road teaching the body of Christ. In my opinion, she is too young in the Lord to be taking on that much responsibility. When I was young in the Lord, I wanted to do some things and felt I was ready. I look back and am grateful that God closed the doors. I wasn't ready, and there was the possibility I would have hurt others and myself in the process.

Yet we cannot just ask those with ambition and a call to set up chairs for ten years. I knew I was to be a speaker, and only spoke twice publicly in 11 years as an associate pastor. That was a mistake—on my part to let it happen and on my bishop's part to not nurture my gift with some additional opportunities where I could have grown and learned.

I used to travel with men of God and sit for hours, listening to them, never being called on to say even a few words. Just this past weekend I was speaking in a church and had a fellow minister with me. I gave him some time address the church and then kept him next to me in the pulpit while I asked him some questions about what God was doing in his life and ministry. At the end, the local pastor took an offering for my brother's ministry and gave me nothing after I spoke. You know what I thought of that? I thought it was great! Knowing how it feels to be ignored and passed over, I determined long ago to share whatever opportunities I had with others whenever I could. I rejoice in how it all worked out for my friend in that situation last weekend.

v. 7 – I know Paul didn't mention this stipulation first, but I happen to think it's so important. If a man is in ministry but his employees or his place of work doesn't think

much of his walk, then I don't think that man is ready for ministry. If the man doesn't pay his bills, he has a bad credit rating and thus a bad reputation with those outside the church. That should have some repercussions for him as a leader.

How is your reputation with those outside the church? Would they see you as a man or woman of integrity? Do you return phone calls? Keep promises? Take care of your home and pay your bills in a timely manner? Do you see those things as important components of your spiritual leadership?

v. 8 – Those who serve (deacons) but who may not reach the highest levels of leadership (elders) must still be subject to the same characteristics of bishops or elders. As Paul said, it's good to be zealous for leadership, as long as you're willing to pay the price and fulfill God's requirements for leadership. It is interesting that anointing or powerful pulpit ministry is nowhere mentioned in the list of requirements. **What does that say to do? How have we changed this list of requirements today? Are the changes for the better for worse?**

Day Five

9 They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. 11 In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

v. 9 – I don't think I noticed what this verse had to say before today. That statement is part of the beauty of the Word. There is so much to see and learn under the guidance of the Spirit. One lifetime isn't enough to study God's word. At any rate, not only are elders, bishops and deacons to have good character, they must also have the ability to grasp and hold the "deep truths" of the faith. I would go on to say that not only is this a requirement to *become* a leader, but it is also a requirement to *remain* in leadership.

That means that we must devise some means to evaluate leadership in the church, both morally and doctrinally. We must determine whether leaders are growing in their faith and the knowledge of the same. I haven't given much thought to this issue, and I'm not saying it will be easy. Each church or organization, however, must pay attention to the important task of leadership development, growth and maintenance.

If you are a leader, are you growing in the knowledge of your faith? What are you reading to do so? What training have you attended recently? What did you learn?

What's more, Paul wanted them to grasp these truths with a clear conscience. A leader can never just grow in knowledge. He or she must grow as they maintain their moral purity. I would also say they must grow in their ability to work with people, the main resource of the Church and the main focus of God's love. If he or she has mistreated people, that leader cannot be said to walk in good conscience. **Are you at peace with all people, or at least as much peace as they will allow?**

v. 10 – I wonder what Paul had in mind as a test for deacons. Deacons were to serve, so I wonder if Paul wanted to prove their ability to serve before they were selected. This verse is in the context of holding deep truths successfully, so I wonder if Paul wanted the candidate to be tested where doctrine was concerned. It seems like Paul wanted the test to be public so that people who had something against the candidate could come forward and voice their concern. I don't think he had an election in mind, but that is how the first deacons were chosen (see Acts 6:1-7).

v. 11 – The NIV translates the word here “wives,” meaning that the wives of male deacons must be above reproach. Other interpreters consider this word to mean women, which would indicate that deacons could be female. I'm not sure what to think about that word, but I know what I think about women deacons. I am in favor! It would be inconceivable to me that a position of service in the church would be closed to a woman. I think a better case can be made that a woman could not be in a position to govern (elder or bishop), but I even question that interpretation.

In this verse, I have no problem seeing the meaning to be that the partner of one in ministry must also be a good example of godly living, holding to sound doctrine.

I think the Church has severely hindered its ability to carry out its mission by only utilizing half of its gifts as represented in men. Women should have more of a role in the church. I know there are strong women who could tend to dominate and control, but I know a lot of men who have done and do the same thing. The problem isn't women, the problem is sin and it's a problem that all people have. We must develop systems and expectations that take into account the church is run by imperfect people. Therefore the church will be imperfect.

Day Six

12 A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. 13 Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus. 14 Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, 15 if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

v. 12 – A deacon must also manage his household well, just as an elder was expected to do.

v. 13 – It is critical that those who serve understand that they must serve well. There is an old saying that goes, “Good enough for government work.” It can be changed slightly to say, “Good enough for church work.” Churches ask me all the time, “How can we manage and motivate our volunteers?” In other words, people don't show up, don't follow through and don't produce excellence. Why? It's the church and people see it as an optional commitment.

You know what my answer is to the question raised? Here it is: “You should have a job description for each volunteer with measurable standards. If the volunteer falls below those standards, you should have a meeting to determine why. If there is no valid reason except irresponsibility, you should put that person on warning, train them and reevaluate later. If the problem persists, you should transfer them to other duties, or even fire or sack them.” Yes, you can remove a volunteer! That is one way to maintain excellence. But the church has been hesitant to take this stand, preferring to tolerate sloppy work because, well, we’re the church of grace and it is “good enough for church work.”

The deacons Paul was addressing were volunteers, yet they had to maintain high standards because they were working for God. I would suggest that our standards need to be higher for volunteers in the church than for any other volunteer on earth. After all, a volunteer in the church is doing God’s work and God always deserves and requires the best.

vs. 14&15 – Paul wanted Timothy to instruct others in how the church should conduct its business. Paul had high expectations; today we often have low expectations except for those on the church payroll. We often work them to death for meager wages but excuse poor performance among volunteers because, after all, they’re volunteers and aren’t getting paid.

The other problem with volunteers is that we often put them in situations where they are ill-suited to serve. It’s like putting someone who can’t sing up to sing. When they try, it’s painful. We have people doing nursery, administration and ushering who aren’t gifted to do those things and it’s painful to watch! Part of the problem is that we’re so desperate for workers that we accept anyone. The other problem is that we have so few options of where people can serve that we don’t create new options based on the gifting the people have.

It’s almost like we say, “You can do anything in the church, *anything* you like, as long as it’s in the choir, nursery or ushering.” Instead we should say, “What is your gift? Hospital visitation? Fine, we don’t have a hospital visitation team but we’re going to start one right now and you’ll be the first member!” Does this make sense?

How can we equip the saints for the work of ministry (see Ephesians 4:11) if we keep putting the saints into ministries they aren’t gifted to do? After all, if someone doesn’t have a gift, it’s not their fault. The Holy Spirit didn’t see fit to give it to them. And if they don’t have it, then they can’t go out and learn it. It’s a gift, not a learned behavior.

As you can tell, I am frustrated with the Church’s inability both to help people identify their purpose and gifts and then to equip them express that purpose and gift.

Day Seven

16 Without a doubt, the mystery of godliness is great: Jesus appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory. Who can understand such wonders?

v. 16 – This appears to have been a simple creed or hymn of the early church. Many could not read, so it was incumbent upon the church to develop sayings that could easily summarize the basics of the faith. I like this simple summary with few words. I think we should all work to summarize what we believe in simple, concise terms with few words. Those in marketing would say it is essential to do that for the sake of getting any message across. Peter Drucker used to teach that your mission, whether corporate or personal, should be short enough to fit on the front of a t-shirt.

My personal purpose is “to create order out of chaos.” My company purpose is “bringing clarity to your purpose, order to your world.” The mission of these studies is to “help you apply the word of God every day.” I write *The Monday Memo* to help you “enhance your purpose and productivity.” The purpose of my blog is to “bring you into my world.”

Can you describe what you do and believe in just a few words? If not, why not? Consider taking some time to do this for yourself, your department at work, your company or your church. It’s a valuable exercise. If you aren’t clear about who you are and what you do, I guarantee that no one else is clear. So do what you have to do to get clear!