

How to use this reading plan:

1. Start by praying that God would open your eyes and heart to understanding what it is He would have you learn from His Word
2. Read the weekly passage
3. Use the HOPE Journaling Method to dive-in on what God is showing you
4. Connect with a small group to discuss what God is showing you
5. Read the “Weekly Devotional” and “Read Also” passages to help deepen your understanding of the primary weekly reading
6. Answer the weekly “Group Questions” on your own. Again, connect with your small group to discuss these answers, pray for one another, and encourage each other towards holiness, growth, and knowledge.
7. Take action on the “Group Questions” in order to live out the calling of Christian life and to help people find and follow Jesus!



Context

Author: Paul

Date: mid-60s AD

Recipient: Timothy

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to Timothy probably in the mid-60s A.D., during a mission trip not recorded in Scripture. This trip took place after the events described in Acts, between Paul's first and final Roman imprisonments. Writing from an unknown location, Paul wrote to Timothy at Ephesus to instruct him on how to lead the church there. Ephesus was a wealthy and highly influential port city in the Roman province of Asia, renowned for its temple of Artemis (Diana).

Theme and Purpose

The letter's theme is that the gospel leads to practical, visible change in believers' lives. The true gospel, in contrast to false teaching, must and will always lead to godliness. Paul wrote 1 Timothy to advise his coworker Timothy about issues in the church in Ephesus. False teachers are the main cause for the letter. Their teaching apparently involved incorrect assumptions about the law and not allowing marriage and certain foods. Paul's real concern is with the results of the false teaching. For example, it promotes mere theories over solid truth. It also leads to arrogance and greed. Paul focuses on the fact that true Christianity is shown in lifestyles shaped by the gospel. Those whose lives are not shaped by the gospel have turned away from the faith. Furthermore, Paul instructs Timothy on how to order the church properly.¹

¹ "Introduction to 1 Timothy," ESV Bible, <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/introduction-to-1-timothy/>

Outline of 1 Timothy

Note: Sermons on each passage will be preached on the Sunday following the reading

Week of Monday, August 24, 2020	1 Timothy 1:1-11
Week of Monday, August 31, 2020	1 Timothy 1:12-20
Week of Monday, September 7, 2020	1 Timothy 2:1-7
Week of Monday, September 14, 2020	1 Timothy 2:8-15
Week of Monday, September 21, 2020	1 Timothy 3:1-13
Week of Monday, September 28, 2020 – Big Give	<reading TBD>
Week of Monday, October 5, 2020	1 Timothy 3:14-16
Week of Monday, October 12, 2020	1 Timothy 4:1-5
Week of Monday, October 19, 2020	1 Timothy 4:6-10
Week of Monday, October 26, 2020	1 Timothy 4:11-5:2
Week of Monday, November 2, 2020	1 Timothy 5:1-16
Week of Monday, November 9, 2020	1 Timothy 5:17-6:2a
Week of Monday, November 16, 2020	1 Timothy 6:2b-10
Week of Monday, November 23, 2020	1 Timothy 6:11-16
Week of Monday, November 30, 2020	1 Timothy 6:17-21

Week of Monday, August 24, 2020

1 Timothy 1:1-11

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope: 2 To Timothy, my true son in the faith. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. 3 As I urged you when I went to Macedonia, remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach false doctrine 4 or to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies. These promote empty speculations rather than God's plan, which operates by faith. 5 Now the goal of our instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. 6 Some have departed from these and turned aside to fruitless discussion. 7 They want to be teachers of the law, although they don't understand what they are saying or what they are insisting on. 8 But we know that the law is good, provided one uses it legitimately. 9 We know that the law is not meant for a righteous person, but for the lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinful, for the unholy and irreverent, for those who kill their fathers and mothers, for murderers, 10 for the sexually immoral and males who have sex with males, for slave traders, liars, perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching 11 that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which was entrusted to me. -- 1 Timothy 1:1-11 (CSB)

HOPE Journaling

H – Highlight what stands out to you

O – Observe what it teaches

P – Practice this in your life

E – Express this in your prayers

Weekly Devotional

“He that perverts truth shall soon be incapable of knowing the true from the false. If you persist in wearing glasses that distort, everything will be distorted to you.”

– Charles H Spurgeon

A 2017 Lifeway Research study showed that 69% of self-professing Christians in the United States believe that God wants His people to be financially wealthy in this lifetime. The same study showed that 38% of churchgoers in the United States say that the church they attend teaches that God will bring financial wealth to those who give more to their church. This is what is commonly called the “prosperity gospel.”

False teaching, false gospels, like that of the prosperity gospel are prevalent in the church today. But this is not a new problem. Ever since the beginning of the Church over 2,000 years ago, false teaching has found its way into the local church. We see some of the same issues in the church today that Paul lists in his letter to Timothy regarding the Ephesian church: sexuality, dishonesty, and more. We see some churches around the world pushing forth a gospel that distorts the truth for what feels right. Paul doesn't limit false teachings simply to what he lists. Instead, he goes on to say any other false teachings or “whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the gospel.”

That opens the door to a lot of potential false gospels. How are we to know or understand what all of those are? Paul says earlier in this introduction to the letter that the problem that is creating some of these false teachings is that people want to teach but they don't even understand what it is they are talking about. Essentially, they don't even know the truth. So, it stands to reason that to be able to accurately discern false teaching, you have to know the truth. The absolute truth. In a world that says everyone has their own truth, we must stand on the one, absolute, unbending, unchanging truth.

That knowledge can only be attained by knowing the One that is Truth. Jesus said about Himself, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). It starts with salvation. It starts with surrendering oneself wholly to the One who is Holy. As we start this new reading plan, it seems appropriate that we first call you to repentance and faith; to belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Once saved, the pursuit of greater knowledge of the truth is attained through engaging the Bible and studying it, not just reading it. Through this study we encourage you to talk through it with others such as your spouse, your small group, someone. Dive deep into the Word of God and grow in understanding of the truth. Grow in understanding of the one true gospel of Jesus Christ. Then stand strong on that truth against false teaching.

Read Also:

1 Timothy 1	[helps understand context of the book]
1 Timothy 2	[helps understand context of the book]
2 John	[points to importance of the truth and reality of deceivers]
Galatians 1:6-12	[there is only one true gospel]
Titus 1:10-16	[addresses motivation of false teachers and how we respond]
Colossians 2:4-23	[the gospel of Jesus vs heresy]
Psalms 25	[prayer for righteousness and truth]
Titus 3:9-11	[avoid unprofitable debate]
2 Peter 2	[false teachers will be judged]
Romans 7:7-25	[sin distorts the truth]
Psalms 119:89-112	[God's truth is good and eternal]

Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- What is the gospel?
- Why do we need salvation?
- Why did Jesus have to shed blood and die for salvation? What is penal substitutionary atonement?
- What is the law? What purpose does it serve? Did the purpose change with Jesus?
- What role do the local church and the universal Church bodies play in protecting against false teaching?

Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- How has the law given by God been misapplied, misrepresented, or abused?
- What are some examples of a false gospel?
- Where do we see the Bible twisted in culture today? What role do you play in fighting against that?
- How has the advent of technology, social media, and the internet exasperated or impeded the spread of false teaching?
- When someone says something like “God wants me to be healthy and wealthy,” “God made me this way and He doesn’t make mistakes,” “Love is love,” or “God condones slavery in the Bible,” how do you respond? What do you say?
- What are some examples of “fruitless discussions” seen in the church today?

Week of Monday, August 31, 2020

1 Timothy 1:12-20

12 I give thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me, because he considered me faithful, appointing me to the ministry — 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man. But I received mercy because I acted out of ignorance in unbelief, 14 and the grace of our Lord overflowed, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 15 This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” — and I am the worst of them. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life. 17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. 18 Timothy, my son, I am giving you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies previously made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the good fight, 19 having faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and have shipwrecked the faith. 20 Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme. -- 1 Timothy 1:12-20 (CSB)

HOPE Journaling

H – Highlight what stands out to you

O – Observe what it teaches

P – Practice this in your life

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Weekly Devotional

“If the biggest sinner you know isn’t you, then you don’t know yourself very well.”
– Jean Larroux

Think about your favorite superhero. And before you get to thinking Batman, don’t; Batman is not a superhero! But maybe it’s Superman and his ability to fly. Maybe it’s the Hulk and his incredible strength. Maybe it’s Captain American and his shield. Perhaps, Black Panther’s enhanced senses is more your style. How about a hero who is weak and insignificant and needs a hero of his own?

Paul is what one might call a Hero of the Faith. He planted some of the first Christian churches in the world. He led thousands to faith in Christ. He rose up young leaders in every city he visited. He genuinely loved and cared for those in his stead. Paul wrote at least 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament. His letters contain some of the deepest theological truths in Scripture as well as some of the most practical application of that theology in all of Scripture. Yet, Paul, calls himself ignorant, unbelieving, arrogant, and the worst of all sinners. What kind of hero is that?

One of the greatest things about Paul being a hero is that he is just like us. He was a sinner and in need of a Savior. He walked in darkness, ignorant of his need, ignorant of his own hopelessness and lostness. That is just like us. It was the saving grace and mercy of Jesus Christ alone that allowed Paul to become a Christian hero. In this passage, Paul lays out the gospel in a picture that contrasts the darkness of his sin against the light of God’s love and mercy.

But in the midst of telling us how he is the worst of all sinners, Paul clearly shows why he is a hero. He gives us an example, an explanation, and an exhortation. He sets the example by telling us in transparent clarity and honesty that he was lost and making his own way to destruction. He was an active enemy of God, “a blasphemer, a persecutor.” However, Paul gives us an explanation of the gospel in saying that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’ — and I am the worst of them. But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life.” And he ends with an exhortation to go and proclaim the same. He calls on Timothy to “fight the good fight” despite those who reject the truth.

The coolest thing about Paul being just like us is that means we can also become heroes of the faith. Are we each going to plant numerous churches? Not likely. None of us are going to write Scripture. But each of us, saved by Jesus, can exhort others to believe the gospel by sharing an example from our own lives and giving an explanation of God’s saving love and grace. We can each raise up young leaders to go and do the same.

Read Also:

1 Timothy 3	[helps understand context of the book]
1 Timothy 4	[helps understand context of the book]
2 Timothy 4:16-18	[God strengthens and rescues]
Philippians 4:13	[God strengthens]
2 Corinthians 12	[God's grace is enough]
Acts 9	[Saul/Paul's conversion]
Mark 2:1-17	[Jesus saves and calls]
Luke 19:1-10	[Jesus came for sinners]
1 Corinthians 5	[the Christian life and church discipline]
Jeremiah 50:6-7, 17-20	[God's people strayed, God redeems]
Psalms 51	[picture of repentance and redemption]
Psalms 119:169-176	[crying out to God for salvation]

Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- What does it mean to be “born again?”
- Who is God?
- What is the Trinity? What role does each person of the Trinity play in salvation?
- What is sin?
- What is mercy?
- What is grace?
- What is repentance?
- What is blasphemy? What are examples?

Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- What is your testimony?
- How can you play a part in God's Kingdom advancement?
- Who's your one?
- When was the last time you shared the gospel?
- How has your faith been tested or strengthened by sharing the gospel?
- What holds you back from sharing the gospel? How can those around you encourage you, help you, and pray for you?
- What does it mean to “shipwreck the faith?” How have you seen that and what is the warning to us?
- How does sin blind those around us who are not saved? How does it blind us who are saved?
- Should we celebrate the death of those who society considers the “most evil?” (Bin Laden, Epstein, etc) Why do you believe Christians take part in these celebrations? How should we respond to these events?
- Who deserves and who is undeserving of salvation?
- How do we “fight the good fight” today?

Week of Monday, September 7, 2020

1 Timothy 2:1-7

1 First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, 2 for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. 3 This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, a testimony at the proper time. 7 For this I was appointed a herald, an apostle (I am telling the truth; I am not lying), and a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. -- 1 Timothy 2:1-7 (CSB)

HOPE Journaling

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Weekly Devotional

“It is a great privilege, as well as our responsibility, to pray for our government leaders.”
– Billy Graham

There’s a country song that came out about 10 years ago called “Pray for you.” Part of the song says this: “Let the good Lord do his job, you just pray for them. I pray your brakes go out runnin' down a hill. I pray a flowerpot falls from a windowsill and knocks you in the head like I'd like to. I pray your birthday comes and nobody calls. I pray you're flyin' high when your engine stalls. I pray all your dreams never come true. Just know wherever you are, honey, I pray for you.”

That sounds like some of the prayers I have heard from people when they pray for their government leaders and politicians. Yes, Paul tells us in this passage to pray for those placed in authority over us in our government, but I don’t think the lyrics of that song fit the spirit of what he is calling us to do.

We are called to pray for our politicians and political leaders. It is not a call to pray for their downfall, but prayers of petition, intercession, and, even, thanksgiving. We are to petition God that our politicians would seek His wisdom in leading our country. We are to ask God to intercede into those things that stand in contrast to Scripture, not in contrast to our opinions. We are to thank God for the leaders He has given us, no matter what party or platform they support.

Why? Because in doing so, we can lead peaceful lives pursuing holiness. In doing so, we become more like Jesus who desires salvation for people. Jesus stood in stark opposition to many of the leaders of His day. And, I imagine, he would stand in equally stark opposition to many leaders in our day. However, Jesus set the example for us in that He did not focus on them, but instead focused on His own sacrifice so that they could come to know Him as Lord and Savior.

Our prayers should be similar to the focus of Jesus. We should pray that, first, foremost, and ultimately, that our leaders would come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We should pray that those who already do would stand firmly on Scripture as they lead us. We should pray for opportunities to glorify Him, even in disagreement over incredibly important matters like abortion, justice, education, and so on. We should pray thanking God for all politicians; even those that persecute us, because persecution, throughout history, has grown the Church. It is in times of comfort and ease that the church shrinks and becomes irrelevant to the world it is called to impact.

Read Also:

1 Timothy 5	[helps understand context of the book]
1 Timothy 6	[helps understand context of the book]
Romans 13:1-10	[the Christian duties to the state and to love]
Ezra 6:9-10	[sacrificing and praying for the kings]
Romans 12:9-21	[the Christian life and responsibility]
Proverbs 25:21-22	[serving those who persecute you]
1 Peter 2:9-25	[Christian life and submission]
Ezekiel 18	[personal responsibility]
2 Timothy 2:24-26	[Christian servanthood]
Hebrews 9	[old and new covenants and submission]
John 3:14-21	[Jesus came to save]
Matthew 5:43-48	[love those who persecute you]

Group Discussion Questions - Theological Considerations

- What is prayer?
- Does God answer prayer?
- The Bible is clear that God is unchanging. If that is true, why do we pray?
- What does it mean that Jesus is a mediator?
- How do we balance predestination and election (as we saw in Ephesians) with verse 4 of this passage?
- How do we approach imprecatory prayers as seen in Scripture (specifically the Psalms) as post-resurrection believers? Should we pray these prayers?
- What is sanctification?

Group Discussion Questions - Digging Deeper

- When have you harbored sinful hate towards others?
- How should we respond to Christians who speak hatefully about politicians?
- When was the last time you prayed for your government leaders?
- Who is a politician you strongly disagree with? How can you pray specifically for that person? How can you pray in thanksgiving for that leader?
- How does praying for our government leaders lead us to live a tranquil, quiet, godly life?
- Why do you think that Paul said "I am telling the truth, I am not lying" as a qualification of the reference to his status as an apostle?
- How are you pursuing holiness and godliness? Where do you fall short? Where do you do well?
- Who do you find it easy to pray for in your life? Who in your life do you find it hard to pray for? Why do we struggle to pray for some more than others?

Week of Monday, September 14, 2020

1 Timothy 2:8-15

8 Therefore, I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument. 9 Also, the women are to dress themselves in modest clothing, with decency and good sense, not with elaborate hairstyles, gold, pearls, or expensive apparel, 10 but with good works, as is proper for women who profess to worship God. 11 A woman is to learn quietly with full submission. 12 I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; instead, she is to remain quiet. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and transgressed. 15 But she will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with good sense. -- 1 Timothy 2:8-15 (CSB)

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Weekly Devotional

“Set your house in perfect order before you criticize the world.”

– Jordan Peterson

Out of disorder, order. That is the very premise of this passage. That is the premise of what God is attempting to relay throughout so much of Scripture; not just this passage. In the beginning, God took nothing, created everything, and placed it in perfect order. In the giving the law to Moses, God took the disorder of man’s laws and created a perfect order in His law. In sending Jesus to the world to die, God took the disorder of sin and created order in grace. Out of disorder, order.

The purpose of both the universal Christian Church and the local church is glorify God. In order to accomplish that goal, they embark on a variety of missions and engage in a variety of activities. One of those primary activities is to invade and engage the culture with the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ; to call sin what it is and to point to Jesus as the Savior. However, far too often, the culture instead invades and engages the church in its own house. In that, disorder is created that prevents the church from being effective at its mission and purpose.

So, Paul, in this passage, is tasking Timothy with creating order out of the disorder so that the church at Ephesus can properly engage the culture around it. What has happened is the culture of Ephesus has invaded the church and created disorder. We see this when Paul says that a woman should “*dress themselves in modest clothing, with decency and good sense, not with elaborate hairstyles, gold, pearls, or expensive apparel.*” Paul is not saying women cannot do their hair nicely or wear jewelry. What has happened is that women were coming to the church dressed in the elaborate and expensive style popular with the Roman courts and took away from the proper worship of God. S.M. Baugh says “Today, it is the equivalent of warning Christians away from imitation of styles set by promiscuous pop singers or actresses.”

Referencing the Creation account, Paul attempts to show how the church is to operate in a way that can best glorify God. And that is an important distinction here. This is not talking about the workplace or school or government. This passage, and really all of 1 Timothy, is referring specifically to the operation, function, and organization of the local church. Paul is attempting to create order in the local “house of God” so that it can go out into the world to impact the world with the message of Jesus rather than the world coming into the church to impact the church with its own message and values.

That is so similar to our own lives. God offers us, through His Holy Spirit, the ability to create order from disorder so that we can best engage the world around us and glorify Him!

Read Also:

Psalm 134	[call to worship and raising of hands]
Psalm 63:3-4	[lifting hands and blessings to God]
1 Peter 3:1-6	[the ordering of marriage]
Jeremiah 4:27-31	[God's judgment, imagery of adorning one's appearances]
1 Corinthians 14:26-40	[gathering of the local church is given order]
Genesis 1	[God's design and order as seen in Creation]
Genesis 2	[God's design and order as seen in Creation]
Genesis 3	[God's design and order as seen in Creation]
1 Corinthians 11	[instruction on the gathering of the local church]

Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- What is man?
- What is Creation?
- If it was the woman (Eve) who was deceived, why is it that sin comes from the man (Adam)?
- What role does grace play in God's created order?

Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- How have the women in your life helped you grow in your understanding of God and of the Bible?
- Who are some of the women in your life that deserve honor for the work they are doing to glorify God and make Him known?
- How have you seen gender roles in and out of church distorted? What has been the impact?
- What does it mean that women will be saved through childbearing?
- What is modesty and why is it important? Is modesty specifically reserved for women?
- Why do you think Paul specifically mentions praying with uplifted hands “without anger or argument?”

Week of Monday, September 21, 2020

1 Timothy 3:1-13

1 This saying is trustworthy: "If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work." 2 An overseer, therefore, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not an excessive drinker, not a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome, not greedy. 4 He must manage his own household competently and have his children under control with all dignity. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a new convert, or he might become conceited and incur the same condemnation as the devil. 7 Furthermore, he must have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he does not fall into disgrace and the devil's trap. 8 Deacons, likewise, should be worthy of respect, not hypocritical, not drinking a lot of wine, not greedy for money, 9 holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 They must also be tested first; if they prove blameless, then they can serve as deacons. 11 Wives, likewise, should be worthy of respect, not slanderers, self-controlled, faithful in everything. 12 Deacons are to be husbands of one wife, managing their children and their own households competently. 13 For those who have served well as deacons acquire a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. -- 1 Timothy 3:1-13 (CSB)

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Weekly Devotional

“It is not what a man does that determines whether his work is sacred or secular. It is why he does it.”
– AW Tozer

We have all seen the musician who starts out just wanting to make good music, the artist who just wants to create, and the politician who just wants to make a difference in the world. Eventually, the musician starts chasing fame and money, the artist starts chasing renown and awards, and the politician starts chasing ever-increasing power and influence. What started out as a calling to a greater cause and purpose transformed into something less virtuous and respectable.

The same is true far too often of the work done in ministry. This is especially true of pastors and church leaders. What starts out as a genuine desire to serve God and to glorify Him can easily transform into a pursuit of a platform or a desire for power. That is why Paul gives Timothy such stringent guidelines on the character traits of potential elders and deacons. He even goes so far in verse 10 to say that before they can take on these roles, “they must also be tested first.”

I think we have a tendency to over-spiritualize the idea of “calling to the ministry.” Look at verse 1, Paul says that “if anyone aspires to be.” The first qualification is an aspiration to be a pastor. I believe that the calling is the work the Holy Spirit does on the heart of a man that gives him the aspiration to be. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believing man that creates the aspirations that is the true calling. However, Paul goes on to say that “he desires a noble work...” and, therefore, that man must meet a whole list of character and gifting qualifications that must be tested before he can take that role.

What Paul is trying to avoid is men who would aspire to these positions for the wrong reasons; for power, influence, control, or to build a personal platform. Pastor HB Charles, Jr addresses a specific version of the problem by saying “A passion to preach without a burden to study is a desire to perform.” HB is acknowledging the aspiration but points out that there is more than just aspiration that goes into it. Elders (aka pastors) or deacons, must first seek to know God better and to serve Him well.

That is why is so important for congregations and church leaders to spend time getting to know the men who will be leading them. They should test the character and giftings of a called man. They must spend time in prayer and seeking God’s will for their churches when calling or ordaining a pastor. Therein lies the value of raising up men within the church that can fill those roles. That is one of the great things about the SBC, is that each church acts autonomously in order to train and test each potential pastor or deacon. That is part of your role as a member at Living Hope Church. That is part of your role as a Christian.

Read Also:

Titus 1	[qualifications for elders/pastors]
Acts 20:17-38	[Paul's conduct as a servant of the church]
1 Timothy 5:17-25	[the church's responsibility to elders/pastors]
1 Corinthians 9:1-14	[Paul's conduct as an example]
Jeremiah 1	[the calling of Jeremiah]
Joshua 1:1-9	[the calling of Joshua]
1 Peter 5:1-5	[exhortation of elders/pastors]
Ephesians 4:11-16	[God gifts every believer to serve the church uniquely]
2 Timothy 2:14-26	[serving God in righteousness]
James 3:1-2	[judgment of those who teach in church]
Acts 6:1-7	[calling of the first deacons]
Deuteronomy 1:9-18	[leaders are appointed over the tribes of Israel]
Acts 13:1-3	[the church appointing church planters/missionaries]

Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- What is the office (official church position) and responsibility of Elder or Pastor?
- Is there a difference in the gift of pastor and office of Pastor?
- What is the office and responsibility of Deacon?
- Who can serve as Pastor or Deacon?

Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- Who has been an influential pastor or deacon in your life?
- How do we view the “calling” to be a pastor in light of verse 1?
- What does “husband of one wife” mean?
- What are the similarities and differences between the biblical qualifications of a deacon and an elder/pastor/overseer?
- Are these character traits reserved specifically for these offices alone? Who are they for?
- Why do you imagine Paul says that a pastor should not be a new convert?
- What does it mean by “able to teach” in the role of pastor?
- Who is to judge these characteristics in a man called to the role of pastor or deacon?
- Based on these verses, what are your thoughts on a pastor or a deacon consuming alcohol? How does that differ or compare to any other believer?
- What does it mean to “manage his own household completely?”
- Why is it that God allows only men to serve as pastors and deacons?

Week of Monday, September 28, 2020 – Big Give

2 Timothy 4:6-8

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time for my departure is close. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 There is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all those who have loved his appearing. -- 2 Timothy 4:6-8 (CSB)

HOPE Journaling

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Weekly Devotional

“Motivation remains key to the marathon: motivation to begin, motivation to continue, motivation to never quit.”

– Hal Higdon

What motivates you? Everyone is motivated by different things. In your workplace, there are likely people who are motivated by money. Others are motivated by time off or work-life balance. Even others are motivated by career advancement, title, status, or power. Behind each of these motivations lies a goal and these goals drive the decisions made in pursuit of those goals.

What are your goals as a Christian? There are so many that we should aspire to: sanctification, holiness, knowledge of God, evangelism, and more. Each of those goals will dictate the behaviors and actions we take to achieve them. When we look at missions and the Big Give, we have the goal of taking the name of Jesus to the people of Marysville and to the ends of the earth. That goal will drive the things that we do. That means we will serve our community in face-to-face, hands-on ways. That means we will spend one Sunday a year celebrating all that God has allowed us to be a part of. That means we will seek new and unique opportunities to engage and love people where they are so that Jesus is proclaimed in word and deed. That means we will clean up trash in stadiums and parks just to open the door for the gospel.

That goal also means that we will give sacrificially in ways that do not even make sense sometimes. It means giving until it hurts. It means trusting that God will provide in supernatural ways for you and your family so that you can give more to the work He is doing through His people and His church. The motivation is not wanting any person to die without knowing Jesus, not wanting any opportunity to pass, not wanting to look back on your life and see missed chances or time and gifts spent poorly. Paul says in this passage that he has lived his life in a way that he is leaving nothing to chance, nothing left on the table. He is going to give everything he has to the mission that God gave him.

What motivates you to give? Maybe a better question is “who motivates you to give?” Putting names and faces on those we want to know Jesus makes our mission so much more personal. Knowing that there are people we love and care about that are destined for an eternity without Jesus is terrifying. That’s why we focus on “Who’s Your One?” That’s why we have shifted our missions model to put as many personal touchpoints as possible into our outreach and missions.

The challenge for you this week is to give in a ludicrously generous manner to the Big Give. Pray as you prepare to give and pray after you give that God would provide for you and multiply your gift to His Kingdom’s advancement. Be like Paul, leave it all behind and don’t look back at the end of your life thinking “I could’ve done more.”

Read Also:

Acts 1:8	[Great Commission, missions model]
Matthew 28:16-20	[Great Commission]
Philippians 2:12-18	[living sacrificially]
Philippians 1:12-30	[living for the gospel]
2 Corinthians 9	[motivations for giving]
1 Corinthians 16:2	[giving regularly and proportional to income]
Mark 12:41-44	[giving sacrificially]
Leviticus 27	[establishing the funding of the church]
Psalms 67	[God's name known among the nations]
Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 20-24	[the home is the first and primary mission field]
Exodus 12	[sacrifice and redemption are tied to one another]

Group Discussion Questions - Theological Considerations

- If God chose the elect "before the foundation of the world," (Eph. 1:4), what is the point of evangelism?
- What is missions?
- What happens to those who never hear the gospel?
- What is a tithe? Are Christians to hold to a literal tithe?
- How does the "drink offering" illustrate the sacrificial system?
- What does it mean Jesus is a "righteous Judge?"

Group Discussion Questions - Digging Deeper

- What holds you back from being sacrificially generous?
- When have you given in a way that brought joy to you?
- When is a time you've given to someone and seen the impact?
- Where can you give more of yourself and your gifts?
- What was your most memorable missions trip? What made it so impactful?
- What holds you back from going on missions trips?
- What excites you most about the Big Give? Which areas are you most excited about supporting?
- What specific gift or talent has God given you that you can use to make Him known?
- What motivates you most when it comes to your faith? How can you use that motivation to serve and give to others?
- What is a specific goal you can set to give more of your time, energy, gifts, and finances?

Week of Monday, October 5, 2020

1 Timothy 3:14-16

14 I write these things to you, hoping to come to you soon. 15 But if I should be delayed, I have written so that 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. 16 And most certainly, the mystery of godliness is great:

*He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated in the Spirit,
seen by angels,
preached among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.*

-- 1 Timothy 3:14-4:15 (CSB)

HOPE Journaling

H – Highlight what stands out to you

O – Observe what it teaches

P – Practice this in your life

E – Express this in your prayers

Weekly Devotional

“So, me think, why waste time say lot word when few word do trick.”
– Kevin Malone, “The Office”

Sometimes when you listen to someone talking, you wish they would just get to the point. “What is he getting at here?” Other times, you’ll listen to someone talk and the story ends and you wonder what you missed. “There’s got to be more to the story.” However, in various circumstances, both of these ideas work well. Throughout Scripture we see these same concepts applied.

One of the things you will sometimes hear preachers say is a quote that is often attributed to Charles Spurgeon, “take the text and make a bee line for the cross.” What that means is that no matter what text a preacher is preaching from, the preacher’s job is to make sure that those who hear can understand how this all ties to the redemption story found in the cross. So, it doesn’t matter if the preacher is expositing Genesis, Nahum, 2 Peter, or Revelation, always, always point to the cross. The whole of the Bible is one great big story that tells of God’s plan to redeem His people for Himself. This is often also called the “scarlet thread.” It is a visual image of how one common theme runs throughout all of Scripture and points to one ultimate story and purpose.

However, that story is told over a period of 4,000 years and uses 66 books and 31,102 verses to tell it. That is a BIG story! Sometimes the CliffsNotes version is required. What we see here from Paul is the CliffsNotes version of the story of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Paul takes this mystery and hones it down to one verse. He doesn’t try to explain the mystery or expand his thoughts; he spends a lot of time in other places doing that. For now, he keeps it simple and leaves it unencumbered. And that is the message and confession of the local church everywhere which Paul is instructing.

Sometimes we get so overwhelmed when trying to share Jesus or trying to share the gospel. In fact, a pastor that we know was once asked to write the gospel in 2,000 words or less for an entrance essay to seminary. The pastor sat down and before he knew it, he was at 2,000 words and hadn’t even arrived at talking about the virgin birth yet! He was trying to tell the big story, when a more succinct version was all that was necessary.

The encouragement here is vast. You don’t have to tell everything you know. Do not try to overdo it! When you have the opportunity to share the gospel, don’t get overwhelmed and too focused on the details! Instead, tell the story of how Jesus changed your life. Tell the short version. God willing, there will be time later to expand on details. For now, take a cue from Paul, and fine tune it a bit. An elevator speech of sorts. Know your testimony, know the gospel, and make a bee line for the cross!

Read Also:

1 Peter 2:1-10	[the foundation of Jesus in the church]
Ephesians 2:19-22	[Christ as the cornerstone]
1 Chronicles 28:9-21	[instructions for building the Old Testament temple]
John 1:1-18	[Jesus is manifested in the flesh]
Romans 16:25-27	[Old Testament prophecy points to Jesus]
Hebrews 1	[the nature and superiority of Jesus]
Acts 1:9-11	[the Ascension of Jesus]
Luke 24:50-53	[the Ascension of Jesus]

Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- Where do you see the overarching redemption story throughout Scripture? Old Testament? New Testament?
- Why is Old Testament prophecy valuable to us today?
- What is the value of the Old Testament if we have the New Testament that fills in the details of the redemption story?
- What is the mystery of godliness?

Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- Think about a time that you have felt nervous sharing the gospel. Why were you nervous? Was it fear of not knowing how to tell the story or not being able to answer any questions that might come up? How can this passage from Paul encourage you to not be overwhelmed?
- What is your ‘elevator speech’ testimony? Imagine you were in an elevator with someone and you only had the length of the elevator ride to share the gospel instead of staring at your shoes. How would you share the gospel in that time?
- How has the church failed to stand on the foundation of Christ?
- What does it mean that Jesus is both the pillar and the foundation?
- Paul says that Jesus is the foundation of “the truth.” ‘The’ implies there is only one truth. How does stand in contrast to culture today?
- Paul tells us in this passage the purpose of this first letter to Timothy. What is the purpose?
- What is something you’ve learned so far in this letter about the proper function and purpose of the local church? What impact does neglecting the local church and local church gathering have on individuals and cultures?

Week of Monday, October 12, 2020

1 Timothy 4:1-5

Now the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will depart from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons, 2 through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared. 3 They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods that God created to be received with gratitude by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, 5 since it is sanctified by the word of God and by prayer. -- 1 Timothy 4:1-5 (CSB)

HOPE Journaling

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Weekly Devotional

“Even Satan can quote Scripture out of context. Why are we surprised when men do it?”
– Gary Rohrmayer

Context matters. Context drives right meaning and right meaning drives proper application. I once saw a ‘motivational’ calendar. It was one of those calendars that you tear off a page every day for a year. Each new day had a new quote from Scripture that was intended to give inspiration or encouragement to the reader that day. One of the days highlighted the major issue with this type of calendar. The Bible passage that day was Luke 4:7 which says, “If you, then, will worship me, all will be yours.” That sounds like a really nice promise for the day! However, it takes on a whole new meaning when you realize who spoke those words. That is what Satan said to Jesus when he was tempting Jesus in the wilderness.

Scripture taken out of context leads to really poor application because we miss the meaning as God intended it; we miss authorial intent. When God authored Scripture, He had an intended meaning for each word and each word in its context. That is why so often a passage like Philippians 4:13 is used to by athletes to describe their success on the field or court.

We see an issue in this passage in our current culture today. In verse 4, Paul says that all things created by God are good and useful if received with thanksgiving. For some, this has been taken to mean that marijuana use is acceptable. Taken on its own, this makes sense. Taken at the face value of the words alone, yes, this is a good interpretation and the proper application would allow for the recreational use of marijuana. However, when taken in context of the passage and the letter as a whole, the meaning changes and, therefore, so does the application.

Paul, as he has in this entire letter, is addressing the gathering of the local church and how it is to properly function. In this passage, he continues that and says that some churches will fall into false teaching, and, in fact, some of these teachings are already taking place. He names two examples. First, he says that some are forbidding marriage, which we see in some faith systems today such as Catholicism where priests are forbidden to marry. Next, he says that some are forbidding certain types of food likely based on Old Testament law which Jesus fulfilled. Paul related these demands to the teachings of demons. Paul is saying that God ordained the institution of marriage and gives the gift of all types of food – these things created to be received with gratitude by those who believe.

Context matters. Test Scripture with Scripture. Make sure that you understand the context of what you are reading; both the immediate context and the context within the greater story of Scripture!

Read Also:

1 Timothy 1:3-11	[false teaching and the law taken out of context]
1 Corinthians 10:23-33	[Christian liberty]
Genesis 1:28-30	[God gives Creation to man for his use]
Genesis 9:1-3	[God gives animals and plants to man for food]
Mark 7:1-23	[Jesus declares food clean and people's hearts defiled]
Romans 14	[Christian liberty]
Colossians 2	[heretical use of the law]

Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- What is Christian liberty? What are we free from? What are we freed to?
- What is the purpose of Creation?
- What is the context of Scripture as a whole?
- What is authorial intent? How do we determine authorial intent?
- This passage talks about the “later times” or end times. What are the end times and how do we know if we are in them?
- What is discernment? How do we use that to test doctrine?
- What does it mean that Jesus has fulfilled the law?

Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- What are some common passages taken out of context?
- How should we respond as Christians to poor application or use of Scripture?
- How should Christians view the recreational use of marijuana? What about medicinal use?
- Why would God create marijuana if it is not good for our use? How does this compare or contrast to allowed uses of alcohol?
- What are some things that churches have forbidden that God does not? Why do you think that these things have been forbidden?
- How have you seen Christian liberty abused?
- What does verse 5 tell us about how we are to receive the gifts and institutions of God?

Week of Monday, October 19, 2020

1 Timothy 4:6-10

6 If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished by the words of the faith and the good teaching that you have followed. 7 But have nothing to do with pointless and silly myths. Rather, train yourself in godliness. 8 For the training of the body has limited benefit, but godliness is beneficial in every way, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9 This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance. 10 For this reason we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. -- 1 Timothy 4:6-10 (CSB)

HOPE Journaling

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Weekly Devotional

“Everybody wants to be a bodybuilder, but don’t nobody want to lift no heavy weight.”
– Ronnie Coleman, 8-time Mr. Olympia

Bodybuilding is one of those activities that is at the same time very satisfying and overtly frustrating. There is great pleasure found in the act of getting stronger and realizing that you are doing more than you ever thought you could. However, there is terrible frustration and confusion at how difficult it is to physically change your body to match expectations or goals. Regardless, bodybuilding is something that requires an incredible amount of discipline and persistence. You have to keep to a schedule. You cannot skip workouts. You have to eat right. It takes time and work.

The same is true of holiness. The process of sanctification and growth in holiness is both profoundly joyful and difficult. The process takes effort and persistence and discipline. Sanctification is one of those things in the Christian life that is left largely at the hands of the Christian to pursue. What I mean is that to grow in holiness, you have to put in the work. To grow in sanctification, you have to persist in the efforts required to grow. As a Christian, you have the ability to control the rate and depth and breadth of your growth in many ways.

Just as a bodybuilder can control their growth with a proper diet and workout routine, he or she can just as easily set it off track. A bodybuilder can grow in one area by focusing on a specific muscle group. A new bodybuilder can remain the same size and shape without growing by never making the changes necessary to grow. The same is true of Christians. We all know Christians who have been believers for a long time but have a very shallow faith. We also know new believers that are rapidly growing and maturing in holiness. The difference is the practice of spiritual disciplines in their lives. The difference is the effort put into their growth. The Holy Spirit gives growth to all who seek it.

What that means for you is that if you feel like you are not growing in your faith or sanctification, take a look at what you are doing to pursue it. Create a plan to better engage in the spiritual disciplines that create growth in the life of a believer: prayer, Bible study, giving, serving, evangelism, hospitality, and so on. If you aren’t growing as you’d like, chances are you are missing something in your spiritual walk that is keeping you from growing. Create a plan. Make it a priority. I’ve always said that I don’t always want to go to the gym, but I have never regretted it after doing so and the days I don’t want to go are the days that I most need to. The same is true of my faith disciplines. I don’t always want to wake up early to read the Bible and pray, but I have never regretted doing so and the days I don’t want to are the days I need it most.

Read Also:

2 Peter 1:3-15	[growing in faith]
Galatians 5:16-26	[fruits of the Spirit]
1 Peter 1:13-25	[call to holy living]
Leviticus 19	[laws for holiness]
1 John 3:1-10	[growing into God's likeness]
2 Timothy 2:14-26	[becoming a good servant of God]
1 Thessalonians 4:1-8	[a call to sanctification]
Romans 6	[living as a holy people]

Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- What is holiness?
- What does it mean that Jesus is the “Savior of all people, especially of those who believe?”
- What is sanctification? What are the differences in justification, sanctification, and glorification?
- How does the pastor function as a shepherd?
- How does holiness benefit life in eternity?
- How does sin hinder our growth?
- What is the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctification? In holiness?
- What does it mean to be “born again?” How does being “born again” point to holiness?

Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- What are spiritual disciplines? List as many as you can think of.
- Which disciplines are you strong in? What are some best practices you can share with others who struggle in this area?
- Which disciplines do you struggle in? What kind of plan can you make to grow in this area?
- What is the difference in Bible reading and Bible study? How can you leverage both for growth?
- What is Paul telling Timothy to point out in verse 6?
- Who has been an influence or example to you in your growth as a Christian?
- How do the fruits of the Spirit point to holiness? Which ones are you strong in? Which ones do you need more work?
- How does having a small group help growth?
- How should a Christian respond to the argument “I was born this way” as an excuse for sin?

Week of Monday, October 26, 2020

1 Timothy 4:11-5:2

11 Command and teach these things. 12 Don't let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. 13 Until I come, give your attention to public reading, exhortation, and teaching. 14 Don't neglect the gift that is in you; it was given to you through prophecy, with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. 15 Practice these things; be committed to them, so that your progress may be evident to all. 16 Pay close attention to your life and your teaching; persevere in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers. 1 Don't rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters with all purity. -- 1 Timothy 4:11-5:2 (CSB)

HOPE Journaling

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Weekly Devotional

“If you see someone else progressing while you are regressing, it is because they are living in light of who they are, and you are not.”

– Tony Evans

If you have ever played a sport in a semi-serious manner, you know that there is a massive difference between stock, off-the-shelf sports equipment and custom-made, custom-fit equipment. This is true of golf clubs where length, grip style, club head angle, flex, and more can all be customized to fit the size and playing style of the player. Bowlers have their bowling balls made to custom weights, finger sizes, and finger spacing. Cyclists have their saddles, peddles, handles, and more customized to ensure they can race most effectively.

In the same way, Christians are most effective when living out of the gifts that God has given them specifically and custom to them. It is true that we all have the same spiritual DNA so to speak. What I mean is that as believers, we have all been chosen, saved, and granted the gift of the Holy Spirit within us. Christ dwells in the hearts of all believers. However, the specific giftings of each individual are unique to each individual.

The body of Christ, just as the human body, functions best when each part of the body does what it is uniquely designed to do. The same is true of us as individuals. We grow best, we serve best, we love and glorify God best when we function in the way we are uniquely designed to function. Do not neglect those gifts.

As a word of caution, though, it is important to remember that being spiritually gifted in one or two areas does not exclude us from needing to live out the whole of Christian life. JD Greear once said that “A spiritual gift is simply a supernatural blessing of what all Christians are called to.” That means that even if we are not gifted in evangelism, we are called to participate anyway. Even if hospitality is “not your thing,” you, as a Christian, are commanded to it regardless.

It stands as true, the greatest gift of all is the gift of salvation given us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When we neglect our spiritual gifts, we neglect the greatest gift. On the flipside, when we use our gifts and practice them, the gift within us is best honored and our relationship with Christ grows all the more. Do not neglect this gift!

Read Also:

1 Corinthians 12	[the body of Christ and gifts]
Ephesians 4	[the body of Christ and the Christian life]
Romans 12	[the body of Christ, gifts, and the Christian life]
Titus 2	[the Christian life]
Titus 3	[the Christian life]
Jeremiah 1	[the calling to ministry and God's giving of gifts]

Group Discussion Questions - Theological Considerations

- What are spiritual gifts?
- Why does God give the Holy Spirit to believers?
- What role does the Holy Spirit play in the life of a believer?
- How does sin interfere with the Christian life?
- What is discipleship?
- What is preaching? Does it differ from teaching? If so, how?

Group Discussion Questions - Digging Deeper

- What are your spiritual gifts? Which ones are you supernaturally blessed with? Which ones do you have to work harder at?
- How can you best use your gifts to serve others?
- How can you grow in your weaker areas?
- When was the last time you used a spiritual gift to honor God?
- Who are some older men or women that have encouraged your walk with Jesus?
- Who are some younger men or women that have helped you grow in your faith?
- Who is someone you can disciple? How will you approach that person to start that process?
- Why is it important that we exhort to godliness? How does that compare to rebuking?
- Is rebuking ever the right path? How can rebuking and exhortation work together?

Week of Monday, November 2, 2020

1 Timothy 5:1-16

1 Don't rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters with all purity. 3 Support widows who are genuinely in need. 4 But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them learn to practice godliness toward their own family first and to repay their parents, for this pleases God. 5 The widow who is truly in need and left all alone has put her hope in God and continues night and day in her petitions and prayers; 6 however, she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. 7 Command this also, so that they will be above reproach. 8 But if anyone does not provide for his own family, especially for his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 9 No widow is to be enrolled on the list for support unless she is at least sixty years old, has been the wife of one husband, 10 and is well known for good works — that is, if she has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to every good work. 11 But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when they are drawn away from Christ by desire, they want to marry 12 and will therefore receive condemnation because they have renounced their original pledge. 13 At the same time, they also learn to be idle, going from house to house; they are not only idle, but are also gossips and busybodies, saying things they shouldn't say. 14 Therefore, I want younger women to marry, have children, manage their households, and give the adversary no opportunity to accuse us. 15 For some have already turned away to follow Satan. 16 If any believing woman has widows in her family, let her help them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it can help widows in genuine need. -- 1 Timothy 5:1-16 (CSB)

HOPE Journaling

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Weekly Devotional

“It is more important to be than to do, for if I am what God wants me to be, then I will do what He wants me to do.”

– Charles Ryrie

My grandmother was married to her husband, my grandfather, for 64 years. Fortunately, for her, she is in great health and her husband provided for her very well financially. She can provide for herself and care for herself in most regards. Where she cannot, her 5 daughters and their husbands and her grandkids step in to help. My grandmother, because of the faithfulness in her own life and that of her children and grandchildren, does not have to lean on the church to care for her. In fact, if she did, she would become an unnecessary burden on the time and resources of the church; reducing the ability of the church to care for those widows in genuine need.

However, this is not the case for many widows. In many cases, age, health, physical deterioration, and small, fixed incomes make it very difficult for a widow to care for herself. Also, this is true for those without children that can care and provide for their needs. That is where the church steps in. That is how Paul is laying out these expectations for the care of widows by the church. He is not speaking to governmental or social programs stepping in, but to the role of the church to offer support.

However, in speaking to this, Paul is setting a pretty firm tone and some pretty tough expectations for believers. These expectations can seem rigid but are designed to build the body in godliness and to protect the resources and ministries of the church. Paul puts the work squarely on the shoulders of the people before he puts the work on the church.

It's an old adage in churches that 80% of the work is done by 20% of the people, 80% of the giving is given by 20% of the people, and so on. This is called the 80/20 rule. Paul seeks to upend this in a couple of ways. He says that the primary role of caring for a widow is to first fall on the widow's family. The children and grandchildren are to be the primary source of care and support. However, if they refuse to do so, even in action alone, then they are “worse than an unbeliever.” Before the family steps in, however, Paul says that if a widow is young, she is to assume some responsibility for her own care and support by remarrying, having a family, and caring for her home. In the case where a widow does not have the family and resources to be cared for, Paul says that the church should care for her assuming that she has been a faithful believer both in her confession and in her works.

However, this is not possible without the entire body doing what it is supposed to do and seeking to be what it is supposed to be. That starts with exhorting men and women to godliness and purity as fathers, brothers, mothers, and sisters. This is how we best care for widows, by raising up godly men and women to care for those in their families. This is yet another goal of helping people find and follow Jesus.

Read Also:

James 1:27	[care for orphans and widows]
Exodus 22:21-27	[protection for the vulnerable]
Psalms 68:5-6	[God cares for orphans and widows]
Isaiah 1:16-20	[care for widows is a sign of purity]
1 Corinthians 7:39-40	[a widow's right to remarry]
Romans 7:2-3	[a widow's right to remarry]
Luke 2:36-38	[example of a godly widow]
Ruth 1-4	[God's provision for faithful widows]

Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- How are we all like orphans and widows?
- What does this passage show us about the character of God the Father?
- What is godliness?
- Why does Paul mention Satan? What does Satan attempt to do in the lives of widows?
- Verse 8 carries a pretty firm warning. How should this drive our understanding of salvation? How should it drive our understanding of works?

Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- A nursing home? Or your home?
- What about widowers?
- What does it look like for the church to provide support to widows?
- What should the church do in cases of young widows still in the grieving process?
- What does the church do for widows that are not faithful believers?
- What is the role of young believing women? Why does Paul specifically state their role in caring for widows? What about believing men?
- Verse 8 carries a pretty firm warning. How should this spur our actions?
- Do you have a plan for how to care for your parents as they age? If this is a stage of life you are already in or have walked through, how did you fulfill this biblical mandate in your life? What advice would you give to the younger men and women in your group?
- When Paul refers to “enrolling” the widows, it seems that he is referring to a program. What would be part of a widow-care “program?”
- Considering the 80/20 rule, do you feel that Living Hope Church falls into this “rule?” Why or why not? What role do you play in the ministries of Living Hope?

Week of Monday, November 9, 2020

1 Timothy 5:17-6:2a

17 The elders who are good leaders are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says: Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain, and, "The worker is worthy of his wages." 19 Don't accept an accusation against an elder unless it is supported by two or three witnesses. 20 Publicly rebuke those who sin, so that the rest will be afraid. 21 I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels to observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing out of favoritism. 22 Don't be too quick to appoint anyone as an elder, and don't share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure. 23 Don't continue drinking only water, but use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses. 24 Some people's sins are obvious, preceding them to judgment, but the sins of others surface later. 25 Likewise, good works are obvious, and those that are not obvious cannot remain hidden. 1 All who are under the yoke as slaves should regard their own masters as worthy of all respect, so that God's name and his teaching will not be blasphemed. 2 Let those who have believing masters not be disrespectful to them because they are brothers, but serve them even better, since those who benefit from their service are believers and dearly loved. -- 1 Timothy 5:17-6:2a (CSB)

HOPE Journaling

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Weekly Devotional

“There are no secrets that time does not reveal.”

– Jean Racine

One of the things that I find most frustrating about home ownership is the never-ending task of pulling weeds. Whether we have flooding or severe droughting or anything in between, there is one certainty in the world of botany, that weeds will flourish in any space available; and sometimes in spaces that are theoretically unavailable. So, one of the things that I dislike as much as anything around my home is too many bedded flower or garden areas where weeds can thrive. I find that I spend too much time pulling weeds and not enough time with other productive activities. I will spend a Saturday bent over a flower bed pulling weeds instead of tackling my honey-do list, serving my wife, or playing backyard football with my kids.

My solution for this, right or wrong, has been to tear out these bedded areas, till them over, and overseed with grass seed. I am trying to simplify my outdoor space and make more of it mowable. The process of seeding in grass is two to three weeks depending on the type of grass seed used. However, what stands in common is that for the first couple weeks, you have to consistently water the seed without seeing the fruit of your labors. You will constantly feed this seed until one day it springs forth from the ground in a way that is almost surprising in its suddenness. As long as the seed is watered and fed, the seed will germinate and the fruit of that work, grass, will spring forth from the ground. The same is true of sin and good works in our lives as well. Paul says that an elder (pastor) should not be appointed too quickly, because there needs to be time to observe the fruit in the life of the man. He is saying that sin and good works will eventually show in the life of the elder candidate; he cannot keep it hidden forever.

A lot of people treat sin as something they can do that is hidden and secret and unknown to the outside world. The combination of the internet, high speed internet access, and personal computers and smartphones has made this true in a scary way. Of the people reading this, likely Christian men and women, statistics show that 6 of 10 of the men and 1-2 of the 10 women will view porn within this month. These types of sins often take place in the privacy of the home with the thought that no one ever has to know their secret. And these sins, fed and watered consistently in private spring forth the fruits of shame, guilt, depression, anger, anxiety, and more. These fruits coming forth often suddenly. When you feed and water the weeds, you are going to get more weeds. Furthermore, the hidden sin will one day be revealed in its fullness. It may not occur in this lifetime, but we will have to stand before Jesus in eternity and answer for all things, our sins and our good works. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Cor. 5:10). Live in such a way that you never have to worry about what will one day be exposed. Live in the knowledge that Jesus, dwelling within you, is always present, even in the secret places.

Read Also:

2 Corinthians 5:6-15	[live as though living for Christ]
Luke 19:11-27	[Jesus will judge our actions]
Hebrews 13	[living with integrity and doing good works]
1 Corinthians 9:3-14	[providing for your elders]
Deuteronomy 19:15-21	[witnesses and accusations]
1 Peter 2:11-25	[integrity in life and as a slave]
Proverbs 10:9	[integrity and sins revealed]
James 5:13-20	[confess to one another and pray for one another]

Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- Define salvation by grace alone through faith alone.
- Define grace.
- Define works.
- What is the judgment seat of Christ? How will the experiences of the saved and unsaved differ?
- How are/were we slaves to sin? How are we slaves to Christ? What is the difference?
- What are the “elect angels?”
- What is church discipline? Is it practiced enough?

Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- If we are not to accept the accusation of only one, without two or three witnesses, how do we treat sins or crimes (such as those sexual in nature) that typically only have one witness?
- This passage talks about paying your pastors/elders, how does a church determine how to compensate their pastoral staff? How does that factor in volunteer or lay elders?
- What is the danger of sins that never are revealed in this life?
- If Jesus has given us righteousness and justified us, why should Christians avoid sin?
- What are examples of good works that may remain hidden for a time?
- Verse 23 seems sort of random. What’s the point of Paul including this?
- How have you seen the fruits of sin spring suddenly from the dark and into the light in your life or the life of someone else?
- What sins are you keeping hidden? What sin do you need to kill immediately before it becomes a weed that overtakes your life? [I encourage you to confess these things before your group and pray together]
- What does it mean to “publicly rebuke those who sin, so that the rest will be afraid?” What does that actually look like?

Week of Monday, November 16, 2020

1 Timothy 6:2b-10

Teach and encourage these things. 3 If anyone teaches false doctrine and does not agree with the sound teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the teaching that promotes godliness, 4 he is conceited and understands nothing, but has an unhealthy interest in disputes and arguments over words. From these come envy, quarreling, slander, evil suspicions, 5 and constant disagreement among people whose minds are depraved and deprived of the truth, who imagine that godliness is a way to material gain. 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. 8 If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. 9 But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. -- 1 Timothy 6:2-10 (CSB)

HOPE Journaling

H – Highlight what stands out to you

O – Observe what it teaches

P – Practice this in your life

E – Express this in your prayers

Weekly Devotional

“The real measure of your wealth is how much you’d be worth if you lost all your money.”

– Bernard Meltzer

We’ve all heard it said one way or another. You can’t take it with you when you go. You’ll never see a U-Haul following a hearse. You leave the world the same way you came in, crying, diapered, and poor. No matter how you say it, there is a very real truth behind the sentiment. Paul expresses it here, perhaps a bit more eloquently, by saying “you brought nothing into this world and you will take nothing out.” The reality is that no matter what you do, you cannot leave this world financially richer than you came into it. None of your earthly possessions cross into eternity with you!

I have never heard of someone on their death bed saying “I sure wish I spent more time at work” or “If only I had made more money in my lifetime, then all this would be worth it.” Matter of fact, what you hear is the opposite. That people reflect on their time on earth and wish they had spent more of it with family. They wish they had passed up that promotion or pay raise so that they could be there for their kids’ birthdays or sports events. But this world tells us we must pursue success as the world defines success: financial gain, wealth, power, status, title, and so on.

Paul tells us those pursuits are not just a waste of time, but that they lead to destruction. We all know of stories of seemingly good men who destroyed their families because their pursuit of wealth led them to anger, greed, adultery, addiction, and so on. That may seem like a stretch, to say that the pursuit of money would lead to all those things, but that is exactly what Paul is telling us here. He is saying that money and the pursuit of money is a temptation and a trap that plunges men (and women) into eventual destruction. It is like a man digging a hole that eventually gets so deep he can’t get out. We see this same thing in nature. There was a study done where biologists put a shiny object in a glass bottle that was anchored to the ground. Monkeys would come and reach into the bottle and grab the object. But with the object in their hand, they could not retract their hand. Rather than dropping the shiny object and removing their hand, the monkeys refused to let go of this treasure and willingly (even if begrudgingly) remained trapped. If not for the biologists, the monkeys would hold onto that shiny treasure until their eventual death. To save themselves, all they had to do was let go of the treasure.

We do the same thing as people. Stress, anxiety, depression, addiction, and suicides are all at all-time highs. This was true even pre-covid. It is all in the name of more, more, more. And to what end? “We spend money we don’t have to buy things we don’t need to impress people we don’t like” – Dave Ramsey. “The love of money is the root of ALL kinds of evil” (emphasis mine). It is a trap to chase wealth. Wealth is not bad. But chase Jesus, crave Jesus, not money, and you will experience joy, contentment, and satisfaction rather than “piercing yourself with many griefs.” God *will* provide everything you *need*.

Read Also:

2 Timothy 2:14-26	[godliness and avoiding division]
Romans 16:17-18	[avoiding divisive people]
2 Timothy 3	[struggles of earthly pursuits]
Hebrews 13:1-5	[exhortation to godly living]
Job 1-2	[Job loses everything of earthly value]
Ecclesiastes 5:8-20	[the realities of wealth]
Psalms 49	[misplaced trust in wealth]
Luke 12:13-34	[laying up treasures and trusting God to provide]
Proverbs 28:20-22	[foolishness of pursuing wealth]

Group Discussion Questions - Theological Considerations

- What sins are present in the sinful love of money?
- Why does money seem to be such an issue in Scripture?
- What is the difference in joy and happiness?
- Who is Satan?
- What is godly contentment?
- What does biblical unity look like?
- Define temptation. When does temptation become sinful?
- Define evil. How does this measure against cultural definitions of evil?
- Define idolatry. How does this measure against cultural definitions of idolatry?

Group Discussion Questions - Digging Deeper

- How have you put career, money, etc above Jesus?
- What is something you've missed out on because of career, money, etc that you wish you could get back?
- How can you better seek Jesus and godliness?
- Where have you seen Satan be successful in sowing division in the church?
- How does Satan seek to divide the church using the church?
- What is something you bought for the wrong reasons?
- How do you balance providing for your family and career/financial success?
- What does it mean to leave a legacy for your kids?
- How does the idea of false teaching in verse 3 fit in with the rest of this passage?
- How does this focus on godly contentment rather than contentment in wealth fit in with the rest of 1 Timothy?
- How does chasing wealth become a trap? What is the trap?

Week of Monday, November 23, 2020

1 Timothy 6:11-16

11 But you, man of God, flee from these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of eternal life to which you were called and about which you have made a good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13 In the presence of God, who gives life to all, and of Christ Jesus, who gave a good confession before Pontius Pilate, I charge you 14 to keep this command without fault or failure until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 God will bring this about in his own time. He is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, 16 who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see, to him be honor and eternal power. Amen. -- 1 Timothy 6:11-16 (CSB)

HOPE Journaling

H – Highlight what stands out to you

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Weekly Devotional

“Being a Christian is less about cautiously avoiding sin than about courageously and actively doing God’s will.”

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Have you ever seen the running of the bulls that happens every year in Spain? The concept is that a bunch of (typically) young men gather in a crowd and wait for a bunch of bulls to be released from a pen. In front of the men and the bulls is a narrow, fenced in street that forces every living being to only go one direction, straight ahead. These young men, in an effort to show their manliness and courage, run as fast and far down this road as they can without being gored or trampled. But there is a fine line between courage and stupidity. This event has been run for 90 years now and every year there are 50-100 injuries.

The craziest thing about this event is that each and every man has access to safety. Those fences that keep them penned in during the run, also serve a double purpose to act as their protection and safety. All a man has to do is to stop running forward from the danger and turn towards the protection of the fence; climbing the fence and relying on it for safety.

This is similar in our lives as Christians as well. As Christians, we run this life, seeking God’s will and running from sin. We can fall into the trap of looking to either side and seeing restrictions, barriers, or hindrances to our own safety. We can see the expectation of holiness, law, spiritual disciplines, and so on, as hemming us in and preventing us from truly enjoying life and all it has to offer. However, if rather than running along this path and resenting the barriers, we can turn towards them as the source of safety. If we see these borders as places of rest and protection, we are likely to turn towards them rather than trying to outrun sin on our own.

“God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.’” – Genesis 1:28. God, in the very beginning, did two things at the same time, in the same action; He blessed man and He did so by giving them a command. God blesses us through His commands, because His commands act as a guide towards His protection and His good will for our lives. We cannot view the law or the commands of God in any other way. And we cannot avoid sin without first seeking to live within the will of God.

Yes, we must run from sin. However, we cannot do that on our own. Instead of simply running FROM sin, we should run TO Jesus. We should turn towards those barriers that create the path that we run down as our protection from the sin and temptation that chase us every day. Trust the commands of God as intended for your good and issued also as a blessing.

Read Also:

2 Peter 1:3-15	[pursue godliness]
Ephesians 6:10-18	[the protection/armor of God]
Luke 23:1-5	[Jesus faces Pilate]
2 Timothy 4:6-8	[fight the good fight]
John 1	[Jesus is God and is the visible glory of God]
Psalm 104	[God is eternal and clothed in light]
2 Peter 3	[remain pure until Jesus returns]

Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- What does it mean when Paul says, “until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ”?
- What is eschatology?
- Based on your study and understanding of Jesus’ Second Coming, what are the millennium, rapture, tribulation, etc?
- How does God’s sovereignty tell us about God’s timing? How does that inform Christians waiting for His return?
- What is eternity? What does that mean for believers and non-believers?

Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- What is a time that you have viewed God’s commands as a hindrance rather than a blessing?
- What is an example of a blessing and a command that you have found encouraging?
- What does it look like to stop running from sin on your own and to turn to Jesus? Practically, how would a Christian do this in their own life?
- How do you “take hold of eternal life?”
- What parts of the armor of God do you find it easiest to put on or wear? Which ones do you feel are difficult for you? How does this leave you vulnerable?
- Endurance is one of the most difficult parts of physical training. It is also very difficult for the Christian life. How can a Christian build endurance for a lifelong race or fight?
- What is a time that you have been hurt because you didn’t turn to Jesus?
- How can you be aware of the warning signs that sin is at your heels?
- How do small groups and discipleship relationships help you flee from sin?

Week of Monday, November 30, 2020

1 Timothy 6:17-21

17 Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy. 18 Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share, 19 storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of what is truly life. 20 Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding irreverent and empty speech and contradictions from what is falsely called knowledge. 21 By professing it, some people have departed from the faith. Grace be with you all. -- 1 Timothy 6:17-21 (CSB)

HOPE Journaling

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Weekly Devotional

“When you want to help people, you tell them the truth. When you want to help yourself, you tell them what they want to hear.”

– Thomas Sowell

What do you trust more than politicians? Here is my short list: gas station sushi, emails from Nigerian princes who need my help, WebMD, Donald Trump’s barber, Apple Maps, an Imperial Storm Trooper’s aim, North Korean news, Facebook’s privacy policy, and used mattresses offered for free on Craigslist. Reading that list, I probably don’t have to tell you directly that I don’t trust politicians. Why? Well, because they lie a lot. In fairness, I think that sometimes they do not realize that what they are saying is exactly a lie. Instead, I think that sometimes, they have good intentions, but in the moment and put on the spot, they tickle the ears of the people they are talking to. It is like Trump saying he is going to jail Hilary or Biden saying that he will, or he won’t, end fracking. There have been countless politicians that have risen to prominence, power, and influence by telling people what they want to hear; by scratching itching ears. Again, this is likely done in a somewhat innocent intent. However, it is always done in an effort to be self-serving. It is rare to meet anyone, let alone someone selling you something, that isn’t saying what they are saying for ultimately self-serving purposes.

There is a real danger here with Christians as well. We want to obey God’s command to love others and to share Jesus with them. However, in the process, we have begun to accept teachings, or even push teachings in some cases, that stand in contrast to the Bible. This is clearly seen in the contemporary church where homosexuality and gender fluidity is not just accepted, but fully affirmed. In an effort to love their neighbor, Christians have affirmed sinful lifestyles and sought out teachers who will uphold their faulty beliefs.

So, Paul tells Timothy, “guard what has been entrusted to you.” What he is referring to is the responsibility of leading this flock of people in the Ephesian church. And what is he to guard against? False teaching. You might be picking up on a theme here in this letter to Timothy. Throughout, Paul is warning against false teaching, structuring the church and its leadership to protect against false teaching, and urging Timothy to actively fight against and push back on false teaching. As he wraps up this letter, the theme remains the same. Guard against false teaching.

That is a mandate for all Christians, which again, should be abundantly clear from this letter. We are all given and entrusted with an incredible thing...the truth. We have been given the gospel of Jesus Christ which comes with an awesome responsibility. We are to actively guard against and speak out against false teaching. We are not to attack or shame people. Instead we are to fight false teaching with the truth. It has been said that a caged lion doesn’t need protected; all you have to do is open the cage. The same is true of the truth. Open the Word and let the truth do what it does best.

Read Also:

Matthew 6:19-24	[cannot serve two masters]
Matthew 19:16-30	[misplaced hope in possessions]
Jeremiah 9:23-24	[boasting in God alone]
Mark 8:34-38	[Jesus is of greater value than all the earth]
Psalms 15	[dwelling with God in truth]
Psalms 1	[the righteous dwell with truth]
2 Timothy 3	[struggles of earthly pursuits]
Ecclesiastes 5:8-20	[the realities of wealth]
Psalms 49	[misplaced trust in wealth]

Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- What does the Bible teach on sexual morality?
- What is false teaching?
- What is absolute truth?
- Define ecclesiology. What role does ecclesiology play in guarding what has been entrusted to us?
- What is the church?

Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- How have you seen the truth twisted?
- How have you seen people use Scripture to justify their sin or the sin of others?
- How can money and wealth be used sinfully?
- When does something become an idol?
- What is an idol that you have had to fight in your own heart? How can you encourage others in your small group as they battle their own idols?
- What does it mean to “release the caged lion” when confronting false teaching?
- Why is Bible study important to help you in guarding the truth?
- How does prayer complement Bible study in these efforts?
- What if you don’t have all the answers?
- Share the gospel with someone in your group. Get comfortable with it and go do the same with someone who does not know Jesus.