

Women's Bible Study

A TWO-YEAR JOURNEY THROUGH
THE STORY OF GOD

Week 12 | Guard the Gospel! | 1,2 Timothy, Titus and Jude

1 Timothy: *A Case Study in the Corruption and Disorder of a Church*

The Letter of 1 Timothy was written by Paul to give Timothy instruction about dealing with problems in the church at Ephesus. In that day, there were no church buildings as we have today. Groups of Christian believers usually met together as house churches. They gathered on the first day of the week in the private homes of wealthy patrons. The church at Ephesus consisted of a cluster of several house churches. The Christian community at Ephesus had been founded by Paul during his second missionary journey. Under the leadership of Aquila and Priscilla, the church at Ephesus grew to be one of the strongest and most faithful Christian communities at that time.

Although the church had begun as a vibrant community of faith, after about nine years, Paul received word that the church at Ephesus had fallen into disarray. A group of false teachers had infiltrated the house churches and they were spreading speculative notions that threatened to distract believers from the sound teaching of the gospel. These false teachers promoted disputes and divisions in many of the house churches, and their public disreputable behavior was causing the Christian community to be held in disrespect by unbelievers in the city.

Paul sent his beloved co-worker Timothy to confront the corrupt leaders and to restore truth and order to the church at Ephesus. In this letter to Timothy, Paul gives instruction on how to accomplish this assignment.

1. Read 1 Timothy 1:3-7. *Intervene to stop the promotion of false doctrine*

- a. What is Paul's instruction to Timothy? (1:3-4)
- b. What is the goal of this command to Timothy? What qualities should be evident in the leadership of the church at Ephesus? (1:5)

2. Read 1 Timothy 1:15-17. *Guard the gospel of Christ Jesus*

Paul emphasizes the heart of the gospel of Christ—the essential message that must be affirmed.

- a. What is Christ's purpose in coming? (1:15)
- b. What attributes of Christ are demonstrated by the salvation of Paul, the former persecutor of the church—a man who saw himself as “the worst of sinners”? (1:16)
- c. What should be the focus of the teaching of the church? (1:17)

In chapters 2:1-6:10, Paul addresses some very specific problems in the Ephesian church. These corrupt leaders in the house churches at Ephesus were causing the church to deviate from the priorities of Jesus.

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3. Read 1 Timothy 2:1-8. *The church has lost sight of its mission.*

- a. What is the central, foundational desire of God our Savior? (2:3-4)
- b. What practice is Timothy told to establish in the church? (2:1-2, 8)
- c. For whom are the Ephesian believers called to pray? (2:1-2)
- d. As they pray for those in authority, what is the object of their prayer? (2:2)
- e. What is the gospel message that the church is to proclaim? (2:5-6)

Establishing a practice of regular corporate prayer within the church will serve to keep God's goal of the evangelization of the world at the forefront of the thinking and focus of the church. The emphasis in the church is not to be on doctrinal disputes; it is to be on proclaiming the gospel of Jesus and worshiping God in prayer.

There is to be prayer for the governing authorities and for peace, because peace in the land is the ideal setting for allowing the people of faith to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth.

4. Read 1 Timothy 2:9-10. *Women are not to flaunt their wealth.*

In some of the house churches at Ephesus, the gathering of believers had become a fashion show. Wealthy women were dressing in such an upscale fashion that they brought self-conscious embarrassment to those who could not afford such a wardrobe. This was a problem in the church at Ephesus; it can be a problem for us today.

- a. Rather than focus on appearance, where should a woman's focus be? (2:9-10)
- b. *For personal private reflection:* In our desire to present ourselves in attractive clothing, we may dress in a way that arouses envy. We may display our wealth and beauty in a way that separates us from those whom we desire to reach. Is it possible that when we "dress to impress" we may actually hinder our opportunities to share the gospel?

The church at Ephesus was in turmoil from the problems caused by the corrupt leadership. Two of these dishonorable leaders, Hymenaeus and Alexander, had been cast out of the church (1 Timothy 1:20). The church needed new leadership, and Paul instructed Timothy to appoint leaders of outstanding character and integrity.

5. Read 1 Timothy 3:1-11. *A leader in the church must be of excellent reputation.*

List some of the qualities of an upright, honorable leader.

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6. **Read 1 Timothy 4:1-16.** *Discipline yourself to be godly.*
- a. What is to be the focus of Timothy's life and energy? (4:7-10)
 - b. *Personal reflection:* In 1 Timothy 4:7, Timothy is instructed to "train himself to be godly." How does your knowledge of fitness training carry over to this greater goal? How can you *train yourself* to be godly?
 - c. How is Timothy (and how are we also) to promote godliness in the church? (4:12, 15-16)
7. **Read 1 Timothy 6:3-10.** *The love of money is a dangerous source of temptation.*
- a. What is the danger for us when we pursue a strong desire to be wealthy? (6:9-10)
 - b. What is a far better goal for our lives? (6:6-8)
 - c. *Personal reflection:* Consider your own assessment of your life right now. Are you able to be content with what you have? If you were content with your life as it is, how would that relieve stress from your husband? How would your contentment serve as an example for your children?
8. **Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19.** *It is God's will that we who are rich become rich in good deeds.*
- a. What is to be the focus of our hope and our confidence? (6:17)
 - b. What is to be our behavior in this life? (6:18)
 - c. What is the eternal benefit that flows from such a life? (6:19)
 - d. *Personal reflection:* How does this challenge you? How might you reorder your priorities to conform to this perspective on godliness?

Grab hold of the life that is truly life; center your hope in God alone

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The Letter to Titus: *Believers are to be an example of godliness within the unbelieving culture*

Within a few years after Paul's release from his first imprisonment in Rome, Paul traveled to the island of Crete with his co-worker Titus. Paul stayed there briefly, and then Paul left Titus in Crete so that Titus could straighten out problems in the leadership of the house churches there. The churches at Crete were newly planted, and it was important that the leaders have an firm understanding of gospel truth, but it was also important that the church leaders live according to the highest ethical principles. If the Christians on Crete were behaving shamefully, then this would bring reproach on the message of Jesus.

The pagan culture of Crete had a terrible reputation, even in comparison to the corrupt Roman Empire of the first century. The people of Crete were characterized as immoral, irresponsible, decadent, and untrustworthy. When Cretans became Christians, it was important that they set aside their old way of life and live according to the supernatural new birth that God had accomplished in their hearts.

1. Read Titus 1:1-9. *Leaders in the church must be of excellent character*

- a. What ethical characteristics are required of leaders in the church? (1:6-8)
- b. What doctrinal conviction is required of leaders in the church? (1:9)

2. Read Titus 2:11-14. *Christians must not live as the world lives*

- a. What is the source of our salvation? (2:11)
- b. What is the manner of life that our salvation enables us to live? (2:12)
- c. What is our expectation—our hope—for the future? (2:13)
- d. What is the intended outcome of our redemption? (2:14)

3. Read Titus 3:3-8

- a. Some mistakenly believe that God saves those who are “living a good life.” Titus 3:5 refutes that notion. Why and how did God save us? (Titus 3:5)
- b. As believers in Jesus, blessed by God, what is our present status and our future hope? (3:5-7)
- c. What is our appropriate response to the great blessing we have received? (3:8)

We have been blessed to be a blessing

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2 Timothy: Paul's last words: Persevere in the faith, for God's good purposes will prevail

This is Paul's last epistle; it was written from prison in Rome. Paul is in the midst of a court trial, and it is going very badly. Paul expects that he will be executed, and this letter was probably written within weeks of Paul's death. Paul's primary concern in this short letter is to make sure that Paul's faithful companion Timothy is prepared to carry on with the work of the gospel. Paul has endured much suffering in his life, and now he urges Timothy to be willing to suffer for the gospel also.

1. Read 2 Timothy 1:8-14

Do not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ Jesus

- a. How are we enabled to endure the suffering we encounter in life? (1:8-9)
- b. What immeasurable victory has Jesus accomplished on behalf of His people of faith? (1:10)

2. Read 2 Timothy 2:1-7.

We are to live with strength in the grace we have received

- a. What three metaphors does Paul use to describe the life of a faithful servant of Jesus? (2:3-6)
- b. List several things that these metaphors teach you about the Christian life. (2:3-6)
- c. *Personal reflection:* Many of us come to Christian faith thinking of it as simply an *adjunct* to our pursuit of happiness in this life. How do these metaphors challenge your thinking? How might your life change if your view of Christian service were more in line with Paul's view?

Timothy was still in Ephesus when he received this letter; he was still dealing with the problem of corrupt leadership and false teachers in Ephesus. Paul urged Timothy to come to him in Rome as soon as possible, but before Timothy left Ephesus, he was to appoint and raise up faithful leaders to continue the work in Ephesus.

3. Read 2 Timothy 3:12-17

God's Word is our sufficient resource for life and godliness

- a. What warning does Paul give about our expectations of life in this ungodly world? (3:12-13)
- b. What is the source and purpose of God's Word? (3:15-16a)
- c. How does God's Word equip us for godly living? (3:16-17)

4. Read 2 Timothy 4:7-8 and 4:16-18

Paul looks forward to his next assignment

- a. Paul realizes that his earthly life is over. How does Paul succinctly describe his life journey? (4:7)
- b. *Personal reflection:* Death is a tragic enemy, and yet, Jesus has taken the sting of death. What is your understanding of *your* eternal destiny? How can you be sure?

Finish well; keep the faith!

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The Letter of Jude: *Hold fast to the true faith, which calls us to a life of godliness*

The very short book of Jude—just 25 verses—is a beautifully crafted, tightly argued letter written by Jesus’ half-brother Jude (or Judah). Jude is very concerned about reports of *corrupt teachers* who have infiltrated and influenced the churches. These corrupt teachers have set aside Jesus’ teaching about caring for others, about integrity of life, and about living according to righteousness. Instead, these false teachers have perverted the gospel of God’s grace. These wicked teachers are engaging in immoral behavior and bringing dishonor to the churches.

The corrupt teachers believe that since Christians are forgiven of their sins and have the Holy Spirit within them, that Christians can now do whatever they want. These men have distorted the grace of God and have used the gospel as an argument for utter freedom of behavior—abandoning all codes of conduct.

1. **Read Galatians 5:13-15.** Some of these false teachers may have based their flawed thinking on a *misreading* of the book of Galatians. What does Paul actually say in Galatians 5:13-14?

Jude warns that these rebellious teachers will face God’s judgment. Jude gives examples from the Old Testament and from ancient Jewish literature to demonstrate that rebellion against God results in judgment.

2. **Read Jude 12-16.** *Beware of corrupt leaders*

Jude gives six metaphors to describe these wicked men. What do you learn from these metaphors...

- a. About the motives of these corrupt teachers? (vs. 12)
- b. About their usefulness and value to the community? (vs. 12)
- c. About their speech? (vs. 16)

Jude challenges the church to hold firm to the “most holy faith” and to wait for the coming of Christ.

3. **Read Jude 24-25.** *God is able to keep us from falling*

- a. What is our hope for the future? How can we be confident that we will not fall away? (verse 24)
- b. *Personal reflection:* As you complete this week’s study, read again Jude’s beautiful doxology in verses 24-25. Jude ascribes to Jesus all glory, majesty, power, and authority. Meditate on this reality and describe what that means for your eternal future.

The way you live reveals what you actually believe.

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