



Key Verse

³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. ⁵ The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

-- 1 Timothy 1: 3-5

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, whose blessed apostles Peter and Paul glorified thee by their martyrdom: Grant that thy Church, instructed by their teaching and example, and knit together in unity by thy Spirit, may ever stand firm upon the one foundation, which is Jesus Christ our Lord; who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

BCP. 190

Introduction

Paul’s concern for the growth of the church, for it to carry on the path of true belief and teaching, is manifest in all his letters. Among all those he corresponded with, Timothy was his favorite, the “true child in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2). It is in his letters to Timothy that Paul, nearing the end of his years, concentrates on leadership, specifically succession. The succession of believers – those trained in the gospels so that they themselves will go forth into the world, make disciples, and pass the gospels on to those who come after them.

One of the primary roles Paul entrusts to Timothy is to “charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:3). Paul wants to make sure Timothy understands the qualities of a true leader, one who, by his very nature, will be true to the teachings of Jesus. Paul is entrusting the leadership of the church to Timothy but wants to make sure Timothy understands the qualities that define leadership, the traits Timothy should seek when it is his time to raise a new generation of leaders. Paul warns that it will be easy to see heroic qualities, those markers of success that define worldly leaders. Those charged with leading

the church forward, however, will need to meet a drastically different set of criteria: a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.

► **ENCOURAGED with warm affection and clear confidence**

1. As you begin this study as a small group, take some time to introduce yourselves. What are your hopes for this group and for this study?
2. Who are the names that come to mind when people are asked to name the world's greatest or most influential leaders? Why? What makes a great leader?

 **WATCH THE VIDEO**

The video is called “Session 1: From Success to Succession” and can be found on www.sjd.org/life-study and <https://teachingcenter.sjd.org>

 **VIDEO NOTES**

A Pure Heart. Our lives are defined by the work of our hearts. Paul is concerned with the succession of the gospel. He is near the end of his life – who will step in to carry it on? The weightiest of all biblical exhortations is our responsibility to carry out the Great Commission.

A Good Conscience. Your conscience is a God-given evaluator of your behavior, the built-in judge of what is good and right to do. A good conscience is one that, with greater clarity of God's love and mercy and will for our lives, is better able to judge our own actions. A good conscience is necessary for integrity.

A Sincerer Faith. The Good News is not simply true in the religious or doctrinal way. It is sincere – deeply trusted as personally true. A heart that is changing more into the likeness of Christ is a heart that is making our conduct more like him. It is one that deepens our sense of personal assurance.

► **EQUIPPED with his word to carry out his ministry**

Read 1 Timothy 1: 3-20.

(You may want to take turns reading at the paragraph breaks.)

3. What does each of the aspects of divine training – a pure heart, a good conscience, a sincere faith – mean to you?
4. What is the “aim of our charge” that issues from these aspects? Why do you think this was difficult to wrestle with, especially as a leadership trait? Is it still so today?
5. In what ways have “certain persons” strayed from “stewardship from God that is by faith”? What do you think that phrase means?
6. Read Acts 16:1-3. From this somewhat cryptic description, what do you imagine impressed Paul about Timothy when he first met him? Do you think Paul thought Timothy’s heritage as the son of a Jewish-Christian mother and a Gentile father was potentially valuable for their mission?
7. Please read three references to Timothy in various correspondences of Paul: 1 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Romans 16:21. What might it tell us about the nature of

Paul's mentoring that over time he calls Timothy a child, then a brother, and finally a co-worker?

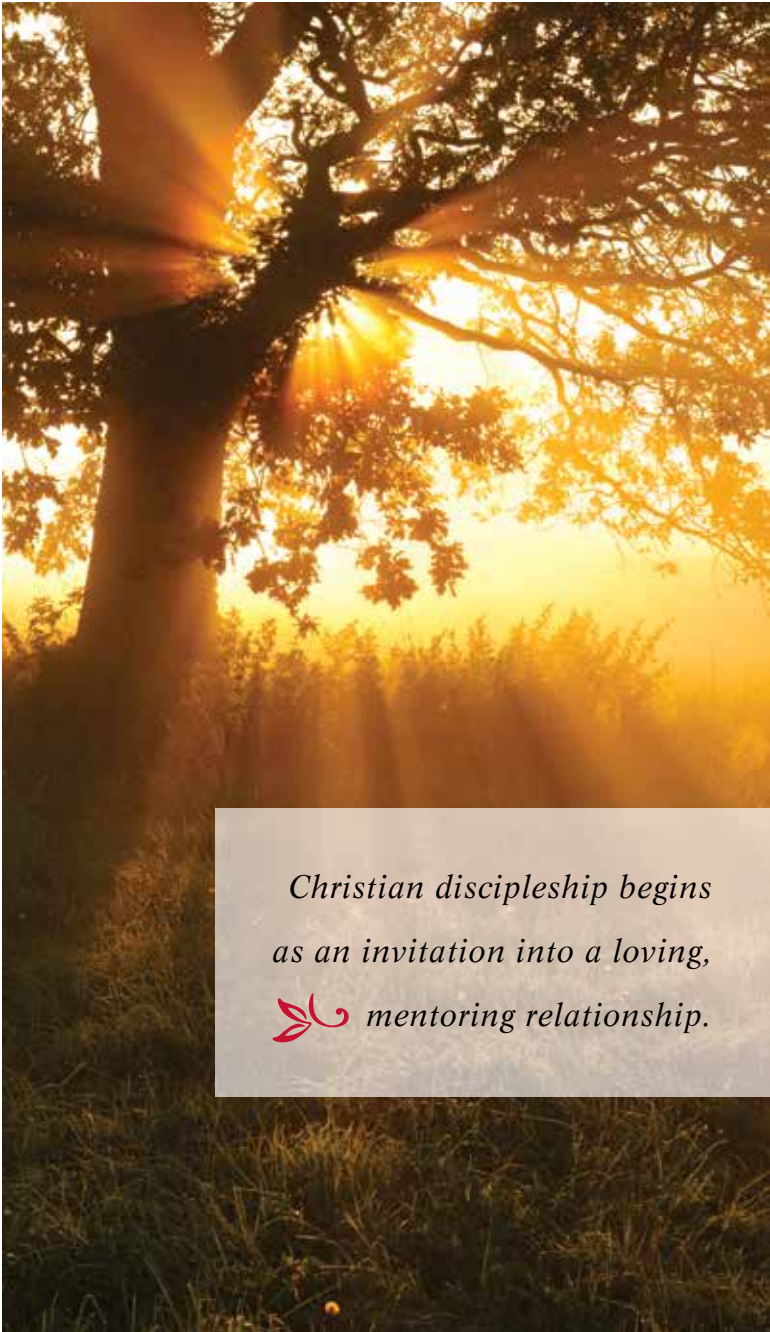
► **EMPLOYED as servant leaders to usher in the kingdom of God**


8. Who has been a Paul-like figure for you in your life? Who has been a mentor to you in the maturation of your personal character, your education and learning, your professional development?

9. How might we develop greater discernment to identify one whom the Lord has placed on our path to come alongside and mentor? What steps might we take to grow in our capacity to help others grow?

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. BCM. 230



*Christian discipleship begins
as an invitation into a loving,
 mentoring relationship.*



SESSION 1

Devotions

Day 1: Called by God

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

— 1 Timothy 1:1

Before we begin any study of God’s Word, it is important to understand a little bit about authorship and intention. Paul wrote 1 and 2 Timothy to his younger counterpart Timothy, whom he mentored and appointed over the emerging church in Macedonia and Asia minor. Combined with Titus, these letters are called the Pastoral Epistles because they focus on the pastoral care of churches and the qualifications of ministers.

Who gave Paul the spiritual authority to write about godly leadership? The Lord himself. Even though Paul was a blasphemer and persecutor, Jesus chose Paul to take the Gospel to the Gentiles.

According to the world's definition of a leader, Paul is the last person we might expect to have such prominence. He lacked reputation, respect, a glowing resume, and referrals. But in God's kingdom, what we know and understand to be true is often inverted. Nowhere is this inversion more apparent than in how the Bible portrays leadership.

What qualifies a godly leader? Certainly not age, talent, or connections. Timothy was young and inexperienced, and his father was an unbelieving Greek. But God chose Timothy and directed Paul to mentor him. Paul's background would remind him that God equips those whom he calls. With human and spiritual input, Timothy could become an exemplary soldier and godly leader.

God defines his chosen leaders based on their hearts. "*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble*" (1 Peter 5:5). God gives natural gifts, and he alone can supply the supernatural power to attract, develop and send young (in terms of age or maturity) leaders into the world. God uses those who trust Jesus as our Savior and place their hope in him over worldly ambition and approval.

Paul, Timothy, and many other biblical examples emulate a leadership style based on servanthood. True "servant leaders" imitate Jesus in prioritizing loving others above their own preference or agenda. Rather than seeking applause, financial gain, or security, God's leaders strive to do his will whatever the cost. Servant leadership is a lifestyle that sounds relatively simple. And as Jesus models it, servant leadership is simple—but it is

Day 2: My True Child

² *To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

— 1 Timothy 1:2

In Paul’s emotional first words to Timothy, we witness firsthand the hallmark of an authentic servant leader in Christ: deep, familial love for his young protégé. In 1 Corinthians, Paul calls Timothy his “*beloved and faithful child in the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 14:17). He uses the phrase “true child,” which in Greek has two meanings: *legitimate child* and *genuine*. Paul makes it very clear to Timothy that their relationship goes well beyond serving a purpose in expanding the church. It is deeply personal and eternal. It is rooted in their mutual connection to God the Father and God the Son. God chose Timothy to lead and strengthened his calling through Timothy’s relationship with Paul.

God wants to use us, too, to inspire others to become all they are created to be in Christ.

While our relationships with those we lead might not be as intimate as Paul and Timothy’s, they should be marked with heartfelt affection. In other words, do not be afraid to express genuine concern for those in your charge. Rather than keeping people at arm’s length, prioritize developing personal relationships. A few simple strategies include remembering names, asking questions, praying together, and celebrating every step of their journey—including what they learned from mistakes and failure.

The secular world often places leaders in the highest position of honor at the head of the table. This placement does not just acknowledge their role or extend honor; it serves to separate and distinguish them as more worthy and deserving of better treatment. A true servant leader chooses to sit *with* the people and participate in their lives. Be a leader who hangs out in the kitchen with the volunteers. When you walk alongside those you lead, your influence increases because you establish trust. When you show genuine concern for others' wellbeing, they are encouraged to labor with joy and fulfill their ministry callings.

How do we know that a more personal, familial approach works? Look beyond Timothy's perseverance and ministry influence to the work accomplished by the disciples. Jesus poured into them as a brother, father, friend, and mentor. He went beyond serving them to sacrificing his life for their sake—and ours.

Reflect: *Loving Father, I pray that my greatest desire would be to see others succeed in every area of their life and leadership, even exceeding my accomplishments. Please help me to love extravagantly, to overcome any temptation to compete or compare. Empower me with the longing to “go low” in order to see your beloved children reach great heights in Jesus’s name. Amen.*

Day 3: Lead with Love

³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. ⁵ The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

— 1 Timothy 1:3–5

Conflict is expected in leadership settings. In fact, conflict offers us an excellent opportunity to influence others for Christ. Leaders are defined more by *how* they handle a conflict than by *what* happens. Paul gets right to the point in his first letter to Timothy: address disobedience directly but do it with love. Why? Because when we extend grace in confronting issues, we inspire change. When we exert power for power's sake or need to be right, we cause more division.

What you face isn't nearly as important as how you face it. Servant leaders, like Paul, aren't hesitant to share the hard truth, but they always temper it with grace. Jesus calls this loving our enemies. An enemy isn't necessarily an attacker coming after your reputation, position, or close relationships—although this happens. Sometimes enemies are closer to home, like a family member who critiques your teaching style or a friend who quits her position working under you because she longs for a more spiritually mature mentor.

These situations sting and cause self-doubt. However, as leaders, we are called to keep our gaze on Jesus and not allow a spirit of defeat to overcome us. This is where our real enemy Satan loves to jump in and lead us to quit. Our Master knows how challenging it is to stand toe-to-toe with the father of lies and choose love.

What issues are you called to confront today? Do they feel personal? Or do you think that addressing people living outside of God’s design will create disagreements? Get your heart right with God and ensure that your motive is to love people well. Get behind your Lord and let him be the judge and jury. You can be willing to serve as his hands and feet.

Unless we lead with love, we will never see the potential fruit that can emerge from conflict. Even if both parties disagree, love makes a broader perspective possible. It builds respect and credibility. Love makes it possible for others to meet Jesus, *especially* in sticky or dark situations.

One of the greatest descriptions of such love is found in another scriptural passage written by Paul: *“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things”* (1 Corinthians 13:4–7).

Prayerfully read this reminder before attempting to enter a difficult situation or conversation. To make it more personal, replace the word “love” with your name. Let the Holy Spirit

Day 4: Under Grace

¹² I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

– 1 Timothy 1:12–14

Grace is perhaps the most powerful force on the planet. It saved us from eternal separation from God and continues to empower us daily as we wrestle with living as servant leaders in Christ. Yet, as we experience more leadership success and influence, it is easy to discount the importance of grace. The more people acknowledge our spiritual authority, the easier it is to disregard that we are still sinners. Rather than turn to Jesus for a daily outpouring of grace to provide strength, humility, and wisdom, we start to rely on ourselves. This is dangerous territory, and it is more common among Christian leaders than we like to acknowledge.

Paul wants Timothy to understand the holy tension in being chosen, called, and utterly dependent on Christ in all things. Who is bolder than Paul and yet vulnerable about sharing his weakness? In 2 Corinthians 12:9, he goes so far as to say, “*for my power is made perfect in weakness.*” In his life and letters, Paul celebrated his limitations so that Christ’s power would rest on him. That is true humility.

It is not common for secular leaders to be open about their shortcomings, past or present. They think that looking weak or limited might detract from their power and deflect admiring followers. But Christian leaders must be transparent in order to develop self-aware and Spirit-led disciples, as well as to prevent becoming personally self-reliant and prideful. Our job is to point people to Christ for all their needs and be an example of how to live an empowered life.

It is important to note that pride often sounds like thinking of yourself more highly than you ought (Romans 12:3), but it can also appear as putting yourself down. This is almost more damaging because when leaders constantly belittle themselves or live under a cloud of self-condemnation, the grace of God is not celebrated. If you find yourself more focused on your sin than grace, seek wise counsel and revisit the truth of the Gospel.

In his writings and ministry, Paul demonstrates a holy balance between bold confidence and genuine humility. When Paul writes to Timothy, God's Word also ministers to us. Whatever your age or season of life, be willing to prayerfully examine these truths to glorify God in thought, word, and deed!

Respond: *Lord, help me walk the line between holy confidence and humility. I recognize that I can't do this without the help of the Holy Spirit, convicting and gently encouraging me to move forward in grace. I pray that I can become a leader who listens to your voice first. Amen.*

Day 5: Unshakable Faith

¹⁸This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹ holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, ²⁰ among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

— 1 Timothy 1:18–20

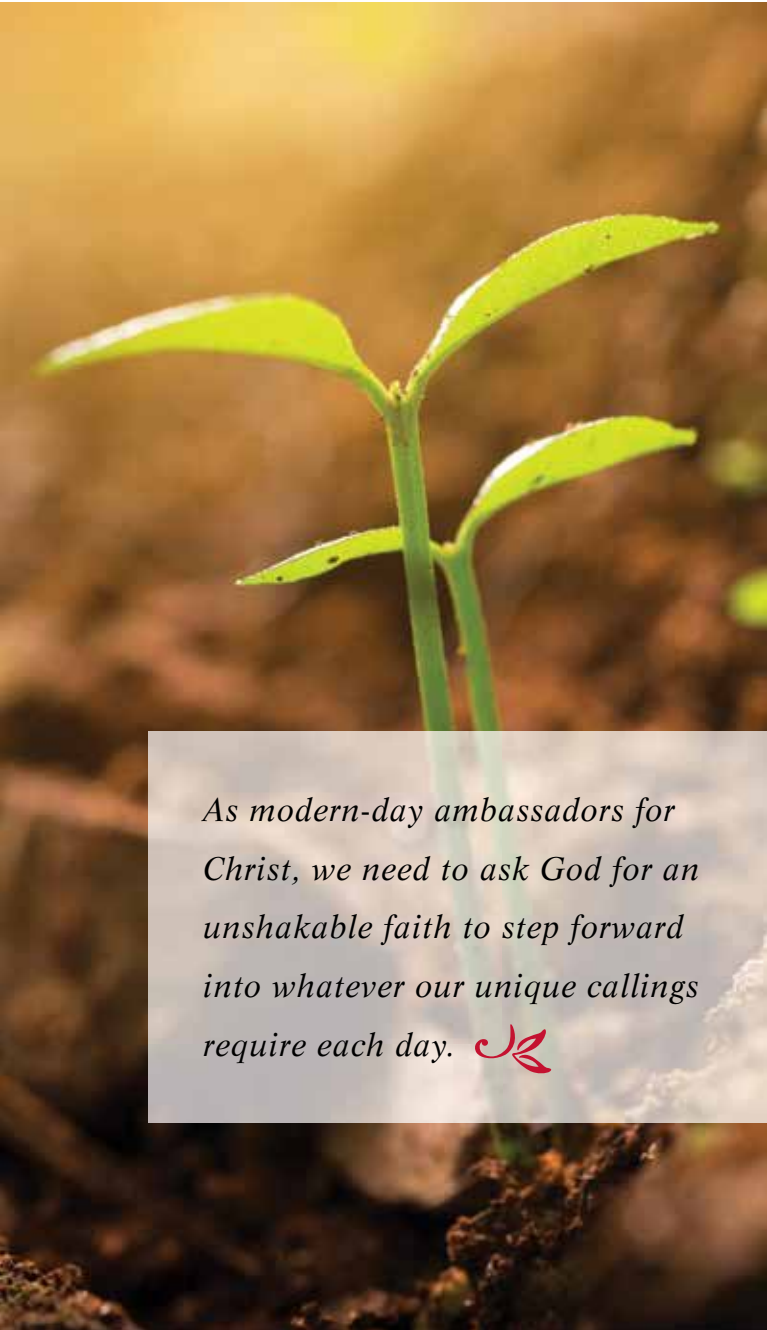
As we have read leading up to this passage, Paul knew that God had chosen and equipped him to be an ambassador for Christ. Despite his human limitations, Paul had the courage to move forward in faith. No question, he returned to the memory of his conversion many times to encourage him when his faith faltered. In Acts 16, following an unjust imprisonment, Paul sings hymns of

praise to his Caller. Clearly, he drew strength from his story, and he could also remind Timothy that he, too, has been called by God when facing leadership challenges.

What ministry challenges are you facing today? Where do you feel inadequate? As servant leaders in Christ, we, too, must remember that God equips whom he calls.

As modern-day ambassadors for Christ, we need to ask God for an unshakable faith to step forward into whatever our unique callings require each day. Sometimes this means acting with integrity or “walking our talk,” even if others are disappointed or reject a godly decision. When we face such spiritual crossroads, we must remind ourselves that we belong to Jesus. We cannot lose what ultimately matters most (our salvation), and we aren’t expected to succeed in our ministry roles in our own strength. We did not create our roles, but we can say yes to pursuing them. The rest is in God’s hands. Our job is to wake up every day and remember that we have a divine assignment. Like Timothy, when our feet hit the floor we have a responsibility to say yes to whatever the day brings, with the absolute belief that God is in control and making all things new in and through his servants. We have the high calling to be willing and prepared to obey, but the outcome is always in God’s hands.

Why is an unshakable faith so important? This passage makes clear that we have an enemy who is bent on deceiving us into abandoning our path. How does he do this? By thwarting our faith, just as he did in the garden. Satan wants you to believe that your purpose does not matter, that your calling isn’t from God,



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