



First Baptist Church Selmer

"ORDER IN THE... CHURCH!" • TRANSFORMED BELIEVERS • 1 TIMOTHY 1:12-20 •
3/10/2024

MAIN POINT

A healthy church is made up of transformed men and women actively sharing their saving faith with others.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Have you ever shared your personal testimony with someone else?

If time allows, let someone share their testimony with the group today.

In 2018, Barna conducted a survey and compared the results from the same questions from 1993, some twenty-five years apart.

Does every Christian have a responsibility to share their faith?

1993	2018
89% stated 'Yes'	64% stated 'Yes'

Is the local church more responsible for converting people to Christianity (than individuals)?

1993	2018
10% stated 'Agree'	29% stated 'Agree'

Although the decline of individual responsibility for evangelism has steadily declined during this time, it is likely even more now some thirty years later. The opportunities for believers to share their faith, however, have never been greater. Family, friends, co-

workers, classmates, neighbors, and even strangers, have the same need today as they did 30 years ago, to hear the transforming work of the Gospel in the lives of those who have been saved.

Why do we oftentimes feel like we need more than our personal testimonies when sharing our faith with others?

We will look at 1 Timothy 1:12-20 today, as Paul used his own testimony of coming to Christ to demonstrate that God not only saves by His grace but also equips and empowers us by His grace to share our testimonies with others.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 1:12-17.

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. 15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. 17 To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." (ESV)

If you are a Christian, what was your life like before coming to faith in Christ?

What was Paul's life like before he came to know Christ? How does Paul describe himself in verses 13 and 15?

Although many of our testimonies may not be as "exciting" as the Apostle Paul's, we still have a story to share. Paul went from a persecutor to a preacher, a murderer to a missionary, but what about you? No greater miracle has ever been performed in a believer's life than that of a sinner being redeemed by the Savior.

Despite his years of service, even being imprisoned for preaching the gospel, Paul referred to himself in the present tense as the “foremost” sinner. Do you agree with Paul’s self-description? What was his motive in describing himself this way?

What trustworthy saying, or theological truth, did Paul learn from his testimony?

God’s transforming power shines through Paul’s testimony. The idea Paul expressed was that 'if God can redeem me, He can redeem anybody.' Paul reaffirmed the truth that Christ came into the world to save sinners and insisted he was the worst. (vv. 12-17). But notice his exact words, Paul didn't just say he 'was' the worst but instead stated "*I am*" the worst. It was not a past condition that he no longer had but one that reminded him of his daily need for a Savior.

What advantage was there for Timothy in being reminded at this particular moment of Paul’s conversion? How might considering Paul’s testimony encourage us in our walk with Christ?

Timothy was a young pastor and needed encouragement to continue preaching the gospel and serving in the church at Ephesus in the face of false teachers who sought to discredit the gospel. Paul shared his testimony to demonstrate that there was nothing about him that made him worthy to be used by God, much less saved by Him. This message reminds us that we don’t have to advance to a certain level of expertise or holiness before we can be used by God in the advancement of His kingdom. If God could save Paul while actively persecuting Christians, He is more than able to save anyone no matter their present condition.

What power does your testimony have to inspire others? How can it change others’ opinions of their own abilities?

Why did Paul receive mercy (v. 16)? What does Paul’s conversion tell us about the character of God?

No one is beyond the power of God; He can save and transform anyone into His likeness. Paul’s conversion demonstrated God’s perfect patience. God is extravagant in His love and mercy. Although we are all sinners, we are living examples of God’s mercy, love, and faithfulness to those around us. If we trust God, we can be used by Him to encourage the next generation to live boldly for His glory and the advancement of His kingdom.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 1:18-20.

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

Why did Paul transition from sharing his testimony to challenging Timothy to "wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience" (vv. 18-19)?

How can a hypocritical lifestyle of a leader negatively affect those under their leadership?

Paul lists two specific leaders in the church of Ephesus who were seeking to discredit Timothy's ministry and redefine the gospel into a message of good works. Paul wanted Timothy to know that when the gospel comes under attack, his personal testimony and faithfulness to God's Word would be his greatest defense. We must fight both to believe the gospel and to actively live it out.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How important is it to live our lives completely faithful to the Word of God?

What temptations or spiritual battles are you facing in your life right now?

How might Paul's charge to Timothy in verses 18-19 encourage you to persevere?

What are some practical steps we might take this week to share our personal testimonies with those around us?

PRAYER

Close in prayer, thanking God for showing grace to undeserving sinners like us. Ask God to help us trust His grace in all areas of life. Ask Him for the courage to fight for the truth of the gospel as we patiently and lovingly seek to share God's grace in Christ with others.

COMMENTARY

| 1 TIMOTHY 1:12-20.

1:12. Paul offered his personal testimony as a contrast to the false teachers and leaders in the Ephesian church. Paul's words matched his life; his manner corresponded with the truth. When our character and lifestyle harmonize with our beliefs, we become a powerful example of God's truth and reality. Paul was an example to all believers, and specifically to Timothy and church leaders, of how life and doctrine must complement each other.

Paul began his testimony by directing attention to Christ. Whatever Paul was able to point to in his life as exemplary was because of Christ Jesus. Paul had an amazing life of powerful ministry for God. His life and work brought about tremendous results for God's kingdom. Even so, Paul knew it was because of God from start to finish.

Paul had demonstrated faithfulness throughout his ministry resulting in greater ministry and responsibility. God knew Paul would be faithful and so put upon him the great responsibility of taking the gospel throughout the known world. So Paul gave thanks because he knew that who and what he was came from God. Paul did not select his role in life. God clearly and specifically called him (Acts 9:15). He was appointed by God.

1:13. Paul had not always been a missionary in Christ's service. Looking back at his life, he described himself before his conversion as a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent opponent. One first meets Paul (then called Saul) at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:57-58; 8:1). While an angry mob surrounded Stephen, throwing rocks at him until he was battered to death, Saul witnessed the execution with approval. Here is blasphemy, persecution, and violence at the hands of Saul. He opposed the work of God; he was contemptuous of Christ. He harassed the people of God. He was brutal, having people imprisoned and perhaps killed for their faith in Christ the Lord. Even so, he received mercy (Acts 9).

1:14-17. There is no doubt in Paul's mind that his salvation was due to the grace of our Lord. Having just recounted how he lived before his encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, his rescue from sin can only be attributed to the overflowing grace of God. Paul struggled for words to express the greatness of God's grace.

Not only was he saved; he was transformed, receiving the abundance of faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The flood from which grace springs also brings forth faith and

love. All are gifts of God; all are evidence of those who are captured by the gracious salvation of God in Christ. Perhaps Paul was drawing a contrast between himself and the false teachers with whom Timothy had to deal. People may claim to know God, but the truth of this love will be revealed by their faith and love.

1:18. This same God whom Paul praised has called Timothy into His service. Such a call, while placing obligations upon Timothy, was meant also to reassure the young man of God's greatness and grace. These prophecies, given in the past, were words given from God defining what kind of person Timothy was and would become. The calling affirmed his gifts and God's investment in him for spreading the gospel and bringing Him glory.

For those called to ministry today, it is equally good to remember that an entry into God's service is just that—service to God. The church and its people are to be served with love, faithfulness, sound teaching, and discipline. Still, it is to God that final responsibility and devotion belong. God Himself enlists and equips His servants.

Paul called Timothy to remain obedient and true to God's selection of him as His minister/worker so that he may strongly engage in battle. The warfare is the struggle in which all Christians engage when their efforts are focused toward honoring Christ and accepting responsibility for personal holiness. This is a militaristic term that admits to a hostile environment (Eph. 6:12).

1:19. Paul continued by describing what was personally involved in "*waging the good warfare*," instructing Timothy to hold on to faith and a good conscience. Faith is the complete gospel, the pure doctrine and knowledge of Jesus Christ and God. In dealing with false teachers, Timothy must be certain of truth and hold on to it and not be pulled into error. Satan deals in deception, and truth is the response that defeats such arrogance. A good conscience is a life lived blameless before God and others. It is not perfection. But it is a life against which no one can bring a legitimate charge. Such a person is free of guilt before God and before the community of believers. Paul wanted Timothy to maintain what he believed and to act on it.

Timothy had huge responsibilities ahead of him. Paul was handing the torch of ministry to this young son of the faith. But in many ways, our responsibilities are exactly the same. We also have the faith delivered to us through the Scriptures. We also carry a conscience that scolds us when we sin and affirms us when we believe and live the faith. The command to fight the good fight to hold on to faith and a good conscience is continuous, stretching down through the centuries to all believers.

With the challenge came a warning for those who reject divine instruction. Strange doctrine, wrong motives, sinful habits—and a life can be lost through the abandonment of faith.

1:20. Paul put forth two examples of men who had shipwrecked their faith: Hymenaeus and Alexander. These leaders within the Ephesian church were spreading false ideas about God and Christ. Paul stated that he delivered them to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme. Not everyone will repent, but the church is called to practice this loving discipline so people will awaken to their sin and turn back to their Lord.