

Session 3

STEWARDSHIP OF RELATIONSHIPS

1 Timothy 1:18-19

Memory Verse

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.

– 1 TIMOTHY 1:18-19, CSB

Stewardship of Relationships

THEOLOGICAL THEME: God cares for His children through the regular means of grace (i.e. preaching of the Word, prayer, singing, ordinances) in the context of local churches led by faithful shepherds.

? Have you ever tried to fix a leaky sink or some other household item that was malfunctioning?

? What happened? Were you able to fix it? If you were able to fix it, how did you know what to do?

Tips and helps for regular household maintenance tasks are at our fingertips as long as we have Internet access. There's no doubt that many modern-day dads have turned to YouTube to help them figure out a problem with the dryer or showerhead. Those helps are effective because they give clear instruction that is accompanied by concrete examples, often in the form of pictures or videos.

It's one thing to tell someone to stop the sink from leaking. It's quite another to tell them to stop the sink from leaking and then give them a step-by-step guide on how to change a busted O-ring.

Paul told Timothy to “fight the good fight,” but he didn't stop there. He went on to give Timothy very specific instructions of how to do so. Timothy's work was critical as the pastor of the church at Ephesus, just as the role of pastors today is critical. Furthermore, it is important that all Christians look for opportunities to engage others as Paul engaged Timothy in order to spur them on to good works and fulfill God's call on their lives.

Session Summary

The motivating factor for Paul in this letter was his love for Timothy, the church, and God. It was Paul's desire to care for and encourage Timothy, whom he considered a spiritual son. Further, Paul was burdened for the well being of the churches, including the Ephesian church where Timothy was pastoring. Finally, Paul's ultimate desire was that God would be glorified in all things. The faithful endurance of a pastor (and all Christians) through suffering to build up the church results in a powerful adornment of the one true and living God.

In our passage today, Paul explained his purpose of the letter, which was to give Timothy instruction so that he would fight the good fight with faith and a good conscience.

1. Appropriate Instruction (1 Tim. 1:18a)

Notice how Paul addressed Timothy in verse 18a. He called Timothy his “son.” Timothy was not Paul's biological son, but his son in the faith. Paul and Timothy had a special relationship in the Lord.



What does the fact that Paul called Timothy his “son” tell us about how Paul felt about Timothy?

Paul loved Timothy deeply. He cared for him and loved him with Christlike love. Paul's love for Timothy was rooted in the love that God had shown him in Christ Jesus. Those who are in Christ are compelled to affection toward their Redeemer. When a dead sinner is made alive by the mercy and kindness of God in Christ, his or her once dead, now living soul is drawn out toward their Redeemer. Like a child toward his or her mother, the Christian's soul cleaves to God. What is the force that draws them that way? It is love. The Christian prays to God, sings to God, reads God's Word, gathers with God's people, submits to baptism, and participates in the Lord's Supper because the love of Christ compels them (2 Cor. 5:14). "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). God's love doesn't only compel Christians to love God, but also to love those around them. Paul loved Timothy because God first loved him.

This love was different than that sentimental, soft concept of love that is propagated in our culture. Rather, Paul's love mimicked God's love: sacrificial, steadfast, and truthful. The Christian's love for his or her brother is hemmed and shaped by God's Word.



How was Paul's love for Timothy related to His encouragement of Timothy in this Letter? How are we called to steward our relationships with one another similarly?

Paul loved Timothy by telling him what he ought to be doing in order to walk in accordance with God's will and in order to fulfill his calling. Christians love their fellow believer when they spur them on to good works. The writer of Hebrews exhorted, "And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works" (Heb. 10:24). This is what Paul was doing for Timothy. Christians should look for opportunities to spur one another on to do God's will in their lives.

This isn't the typical idea of love held by our culture today. Our society tends to value independence and the protection of personal feelings and preferences. Individual rights and personal truth are held in high regard. For this reason, when a Christian proclaims truth from the Bible, it is taken by the general culture as hostile

enemy fire. This, however, should not be so within the church. Christians should follow Paul's example and engage one another by lovingly encouraging one another to produce fruit by obeying God's Word.

In writing of prophecies made about Timothy, Paul was referring to an event that was mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6, when Timothy was set apart for ministry by a group of elders and Paul, who laid hands on him. At that time he received a spiritual gift and a word of prophecy was spoken over him that appointed him for service.

What should we make of this? First, we should note the importance and seriousness with which Timothy was set apart for gospel ministry. This is no small thing and ought to be treated with care and diligence to make sure that the Scriptures are fully heeded in matters of the appointment of elders, as well as deacons.

Secondly, Paul's instructions to Timothy were in agreement with and meant to help him along in the ministry to which he was called. In other words, Paul carefully considered Timothy's station and calling as he instructed him. Christians today ought to do the same. When they seek to engage fellow believers in order to help them prepare to be used by God for the advancement of the Kingdom, they should do so in a way that is appropriate.



Application: Who do you need to engage in your own life by giving them appropriate instruction to help equip them to be used by God? How will you act?

2. Fight the Good Fight (1 Tim. 1:18b)

Paul told Timothy that he gave him instructions in accordance with his calling so that he could “fight the good fight.” Paul's imagery is helpful to stir up emotion and give force to his message, but without further explanation it could be misinterpreted or misunderstood. What did Paul mean by “fight the good fight”?

? What was the “good fight” Paul referred to? Though not all Christians are pastors, what is the good fight all Christians are called to engage in?

Timothy was an elder. The responsibilities of this role are clearly laid out in Scripture. Elders are to give themselves to the ministry of the Word and prayer (Acts 7), be on guard for the flock, and shepherd God’s flock among them (1 Pet. 5:2). Put simply, pastors are to watch for the souls of the people of God who have been placed in their care. Their time and energy is to be taken up with doing those things that will fortify the anxious souls of the sheep. These things are laid out for them: the ministry of the Word and prayer.

Thus, the good fight to which Paul referred was the battle for the souls of men through the preaching of the Word and prayer on their behalf. Historically, churches that are more liberal have placed an emphasis on the social mandate (feeding the hungry, healing the sick) over the spiritual mandate (evangelism, discipleship, church planting) and churches that are more conservative have placed more emphasis on the spiritual mandate over the social mandate. Many people argue that we should do both. This is true, and there is New Testament precedent for doing both. However, the New Testament is clear that the spiritual mandate is always the priority because of the eternal nature of the need and impact.


? How do Christians know what they are supposed to be doing? How are we to encourage one another in these things?

The way a Christian should live and to what end is not left up to each individual to decide. Quite the opposite. Christians have been given in black and white a blue print for their lives. Yes, each person is different and each life will be shaped somewhat by contextual factors, but the fact of the matter is that Christians are not free to live as they please. Instead, they are obligated to live according to the revealed Word of God. As Christians grow in their knowledge of the Lord, they begin to see that this is actually

a good gift and to live according to the whims and desires of their own hearts is actually a prison sentence, not freedom. Real freedom is found in clear direction from God's Word and real power to live it by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.


This way of living is antithetical to the world's conception of a fulfilling life, but it is exactly what the life of a Christian should be. There are two reasons that a person may rebel against this idea. First, he or she may still be a babe in Christ. Christians who are immature in their faith may continue for a time to push against God's lordship over their lives. This person is like a toddler who does not yet understand that the world doesn't revolve around him or her and that they must come under the authority of their father.

Or it may be that this person is not in Christ, even if they think otherwise. A person who continues to live as though they were the ruler of their own life and has no conviction of sin or desire to submit to God's Word can have no security of soul and no assurance of being in a state of grace, no matter what other evidence they may point to.

 **Application:** Are you fighting the good fight that the Lord has set out for you, or are you living to accomplish and gain those things that you desire? How have you received godly encouragement from others in this regard? What responsibility do you have to encourage others?


3. State of Being in the Battle (1 Tim. 1:19)

Paul gave Timothy instruction so that he would not only fight the good fight, but that he would do it with faith and a good conscience.

 **Why did Paul want Timothy to have faith and a good conscience?**


Remember, Paul loved Timothy. He not only desired to see Timothy fulfill his duties for the sake of the health of the church and for the glory of God, but he also cared about Timothy's soul. Paul as a sort of pastor to Timothy watched over Timothy's soul from afar.

When Christians engage one another to help spur each other on to the good works that God has prepared for them, they not only care about the accomplishment of the work, but the well-being of the worker. The Christian life isn't just about doing, but being. The Christian life isn't just a to-do list, but a to-be list. Paul was trying to help Timothy to see that if he would go about his work in the right way that he would not only accomplish the task faithfully, but that his own soul would be cared for.

 **How ought Christians be engaged in the battle? Why is it important to do this together?**

Paul said that Timothy would fight the good fight with faith and good conscience. In other words, Timothy could discharge his duties as pastor with peace of mind knowing that his soul was secure in Christ and that his work on earth was pleasing to the Lord. What a wonderful thing it is when a Christian walks in faith and good conscience because their lives are submitted to God's Word!

Christians who don't fight the good fight and obey God's Word find themselves anxious and guilt-ridden. Sadly, many Christians spend years of their lives following their own hearts and desires. They may accomplish their goals, but their souls are parched and their peace threadbare. Those who are truly in Christ will not stay in a state of rebellion against God. He will graciously bring them to repentance through His loving discipline.

 **Application: How are faith and good conscious spurred on through the community of the church?**

Conclusion

Timothy had been discipled and mentored by the apostle Paul, but he still struggled at his post in Ephesus and needed encouragement, as do all Christians. Paul engaged Timothy through his letters to help Timothy stay faithful to the task to which he was called. Paul did this because he loved the Lord, the church, and Timothy deeply. In this passage, those three loves intersect.

? Who do you need to engage in your circle of influence to help them walk in obedience to the Lord's Word and calling? What do they need to hear?

? Are you clear about the work that you should be doing for the Lord? Does God's Word or your own desire have more influence in your decision-making? How might you ask others to help support you as you seek God's will above your own?

? How does stewarding relationship well within the church tell the outside world the truth about God?

CHRIST CONNECTION: All Christians ought to share the gospel and make disciples, but this task has been formally and especially laid upon the elders of local congregations.

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: Christians should be about the business of calling out to those who are dead in their sins to trust upon Christ and caring for those who are in Christ so that they will remain faithful.



FOR NEXT WEEK

Stewardship of Resources

Main Passages

- 2 Corinthians 9:6-14

Session Outline

1. Giving Is Worship (Phil. 4:15-20)
2. Principles of Generous Living (2 Cor. 9:6-9)
3. Rewards of Generous Living (2 Cor. 9:10-14)

Memorize

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.

- 1 Timothy 1:18-19, CSB

Daily Readings

- Monday - 1 Timothy 1:18-19
- Tuesday - 1 Timothy 6:12-16
- Wednesday - 2 Timothy 1:6-7
- Thursday - 2 Timothy 2:1-2
- Friday - Matthew 4:18-22
- Saturday - Colossians 4:17