



# Stewardship of Relationships

## Summary and Goal > Co-Leader is to lead this week's session

Being a good steward of relationships means seeking to enable and engage everyone—especially those closest to you—to become fully prepared for God's use in the Kingdom.

Have the member with missions responsibility share about Christmas Mission Projects available.

### ***Main Passages***

1 Timothy 1:18-19

### ***Session Outline***

1. Appropriate Instruction (1 Tim. 1:18a)
2. Fight the Good Fight (1 Tim. 1:18b)
3. State of Being in the Battle (1 Tim. 1:19)

### ***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.

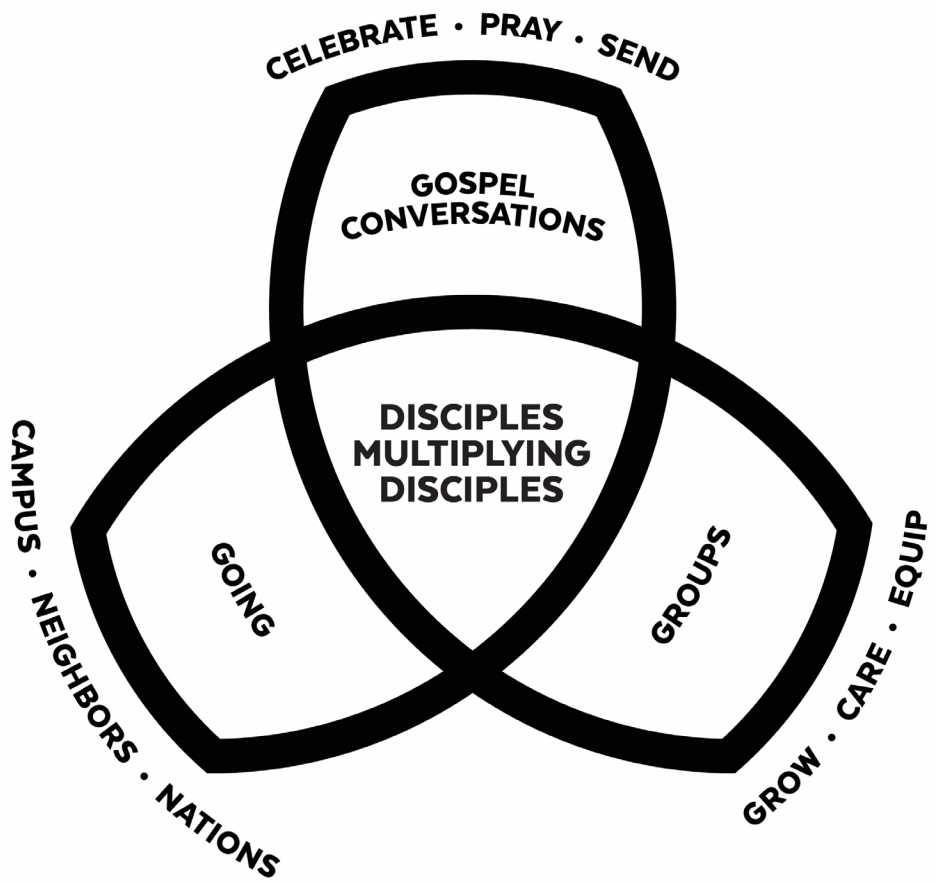
### ***Christ Connection***

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.

# Disciples Multiplying Disciples



# 3

## Session Plan

# Stewardship of Relationships

### Introduction

- ❓ Share about your worst experience trying to fix an electrical problem or leaky sink.
- ❓ What happened? Were you able to fix it? If you were able to fix it, how did you know what to do?

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.

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

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. 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.

- ❓ What does the fact that Paul called Timothy his “son” tell us about how Paul felt about Timothy?
- ❓ 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? Pause and let group members pray silently, thanking God for the “Paul” in their life and for the person they are trying to encourage in a similar way.
- ❓ 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”?

- ① 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?
- ① How do Christians know what they are supposed to be doing? How are we to encourage one another in these things?
- ① 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)

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.

- ① Why did Paul want Timothy to have faith and a good conscience?
- ① How ought Christians be engaged in the battle? Why is it important to do this together?
- ① Application: How are faith and good conscious spurred on through the community of the church?

### Conclusion

- ① 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?
- ① 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?
- ① Invite the person you have been praying for to join the group's Zoom meeting the week of November 8th.



## Expanded Session Content

# Stewardship of Relationships

### Introduction

- ❓ 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? Pause and let group members pray silently, thanking God for the “Paul” in their life, and for the person they are trying to encourage in a similar way.

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?

#### Shipwrecked Their Faith

The phrase shipwrecked their faith is strong language. It refers to someone who once professed faith but has now destroyed it, showing they were never truly converted.

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 conscience spurred on through the community of the church?

## Conclusion

Timothy had been disciplined 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?
- ❓ Invite the person you have been praying for to join the group's next Zoom meeting.

## Prayer of Response

*Give thanks for the Lord's faithfulness toward His people and His kindness in allowing them to labor for the advancement of His kingdom. Pray that our church would be faithful to encourage and instruct one another, using God's Word so that each person would be equipped to labor diligently in the field that God has placed them. Pray that each member would labor with faith and a good conscience.*

## Additional Resources

- *The Gospel* by Raymond Ortlund
- *Be Faithful* by Warren Wiersbe
- *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* by David Platt, Daniel Akin, Tony Merida

## For Next Week

### Session Title

- 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

*<sup>18</sup> 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, <sup>19</sup> having faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and have shipwrecked the faith.*

- 1 Timothy 1:18-19

### 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

# Historical Context of 1 Timothy

## Purpose

In 1 Timothy Paul directed Timothy to actively oppose false teaching. He also gave instruction on the type of behavior that should characterize those in the church. The letter to Titus shows a similar purpose, albeit briefer in scope. As Paul addressed the character of church members, he presented it in light of the work of Christ. The message in 2 Timothy, Paul's final letter, is quite different. It is much more personal, a letter from one friend to another. Paul was preparing Timothy to carry on the work of ministry after he was gone.

## Author

As stated in the opening of each letter, these letters were written by Paul (1Tm 1:1; 2Tm 1:1; Ti 1:1). However, many scholars today assume that Paul did not write them. This opinion is based on the differences from his other letters in vocabulary and style, alleged differences in theology, and uncertainties about where these letters fit chronologically in the life of the apostle. But the differences in style and vocabulary are not troublesome when one considers that authors often use different vocabulary when addressing different groups and situations. Rather than addressing churches in these letters, Paul was writing to coworkers who were in unique ministry settings. Hence we would expect different vocabulary. Also, the traditional view of the historical situation in which Paul wrote these letters is reasonable and defensible. Therefore, in spite of significant opposition by some scholars, there is a solid basis for accepting the Pastoral Epistles as Pauline.

## Setting

Paul most likely wrote these letters after the time covered in the book of Acts. Acts closes with Paul in prison. Traditionally it has been believed that Paul was released from this imprisonment, then continued his work around the Mediterranean, perhaps even reaching Spain (Rm 15:22-29). During this time, he visited Crete and other places. First Timothy and Titus were written during this period of further mission work. Timothy had been left in Ephesus to handle some problems with false teaching there (1Tm 1:3-4). Titus had been left in Crete after the initial work to set up the church there (Ti 1:5). Eventually Paul was imprisoned again, and this led to his execution. During this final imprisonment, Paul wrote 2 Timothy to request another visit from Timothy and to give final exhortations as he anticipated his martyrdom.

## Special Features

First Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus have been referred to as the "Pastoral Epistles" since the eighteenth century. It is reasonable to consider these letters together since they have striking similarities in style, vocabulary, and setting. These letters stand apart from the other Pauline letters because they were the only ones written to Paul's gospel coworkers. The Pastoral Epistles deal with church structure issues and, unlike Paul's other letters, were addressed to men serving in pastoral roles rather than to churches. But we must also recognize these are separate letters with their own distinctives. They were not written primarily to describe church structure or pastoral ministry (contrary to popular opinion), but to teach Christian living in response to the gospel.

## Extended Commentary

### 1 Timothy 1:18-19

1:18. This same God whom Paul praised has called Timothy into his service: in keeping with the prophecies once made about you. 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 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 fight the good fight.

The good fight is the struggle which all Christians engage in when their efforts are focused toward honoring Christ and accepting responsibility for personal holiness. It is about keeping the faith individually as well as in the church. Paul used this phrase again at the close of his letter when he reminded Timothy to “fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession” (1 Tim. 6:12, emphasis added). Toward the end of his own life, Paul offered himself as an example for Timothy to follow, stating, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7, emphasis added). This is a militaristic term that admits to a hostile environment: “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12).

1:19. Paul continued by describing what was personally involved in “fighting the good fight,” 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 which 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: some. . . have shipwrecked their faith. Strange doctrine, wrong motives, sinful habits—and a life can be lost through the abandonment of faith.<sup>1</sup>

## References

1. Larson, Knute, and Max E. Anders. *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*. Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2000.

## Author Bio

### **Knute Larson (I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon)**

Knute Larson coaches pastors and churches, majoring on leadership, pulpit, making changes, and daily grace — drawing on 43 years as a pastor and eight as a pastoral coach.

### **Max Anders (I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon)**

Dr. Max Anders is the author of over 25 books, including the bestselling 30 Days to Understanding the Bible, and is the creator and general editor of the 32-volume Holman Bible Commentary series. He has taught on the college and seminary level and is a veteran pastor. Max provides resources and discipleship strategies at [www.maxanders.com](http://www.maxanders.com) to help people grow spiritually.

### **Raymond Ortlund (The Gospel)**

Raymond C. Ortlund Jr. is the pastor to pastors at Immanuel Church in Nashville, Tennessee. He is the author of several books, including the Preaching the Word commentary on Isaiah and Marriage and the Mystery of the Gospel, as well as a contributor to the ESV Study Bible. He and his wife, Jani, have four children.

### **Warren Wiersbe (Be Faithful)**

Warren W. Wiersbe, former pastor of the Moody Church and general director of Back to the Bible, has traveled widely as a Bible teacher and conference speaker. Because of his encouragement to those in ministry, Dr. Wiersbe is often referred to as “the pastor’s pastor.” He has ministered in churches and conferences throughout the United States as well as in Canada, Central and South America, and Europe. Dr. Wiersbe has written over 150 books, including the popular BE series of commentaries on every book of the Bible, which has sold more than four million copies. At the 2002 Christian Booksellers Convention, he was awarded the Gold Medallion Lifetime Achievement Award by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association. Dr. Wiersbe and his wife, Betty, live in Lincoln, Nebraska.

### **David Platt (Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus)**

David Platt is the author of three New York Times bestsellers, including Radical. He is lead pastor at McLean Bible Church in metro Washington, D.C., the former president of the IMB (International Mission Board), and founder of Radical Inc., a global center for the unreached that serves churches in accomplishing the mission of Christ. Platt received his master of divinity (MDiv), master of theology (ThM), and doctor of philosophy (PhD) from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He lives in Virginia with his wife and their children.

### **Daniel Akin (Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus)**

Daniel L. Akin is the president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He holds a Ph.D. in Humanities from the University of Texas at Arlington and has authored or edited many books and Bible commentaries including Ten Who Changed the World and A Theology for the Church.

### **Tony Merida (Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus)**

Tony Merida is lead pastor of Imago Dei Church in Raleigh, NC, and associate professor of preaching at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC.