

THE BOOK OF FIRST TIMOTHY

The previous book on 2nd Thessalonians shows that Christians should keep working because God is still working to keep things moving. It is the same for Jesus.

What is the Book of First Timothy about?

1. In this book of 1 Timothy, we see how God works. It shows practical ways of living by working and serving others. It is about how we should live out our faith.
2. It is a Pastoral Epistle. Paul wrote this as a personal epistle to Timothy. Both the books of Titus and Timothy are Pastoral Epistles. Both men were apostolic representatives to plant churches and then to subsequently move on. Titus and Timothy were not normal pastors.
3. It is about how to be a good leader.
4. Usually, biblical epistles start with doctrines, followed by practical instructions; but in this epistle, they are mainly practical instructions.

Who is Timothy?

1. Paul was very old by the time he wrote this epistle to Timothy. This was one of the last few epistles which Paul wrote before his execution. Paul was never married. Timothy was Paul's "son-in-faith", his closest protégé and family.
2. In the book of Timothy, Paul was trying to pass his ministry on to Timothy.
3. Timothy was a disciple of Paul. Paul first met Timothy's mother and grandmother in Lystra (located in Turkey) and Paul started to mentor him. Timothy was part of Paul's team of co-workers.
4. Paul used Timothy as a representative to sort things out in Thessalonica, Corinth, Philippi, etc.
5. Timothy was left in Ephesus by Paul when Paul moved on. Timothy was the co-writer of 6 epistles with Paul, namely, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Philippians and Philemon.

Chapter 1

1. 1 Tim 1:2. Paul called Timothy his "child-in-faith". Timothy was very special to Paul.
2. 1 Tim 1:3.
 - a) This verse identifies the key problem that was in the church when Paul wrote this epistle.
 - b) Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to prevent false doctrines from infiltrating the church. Paul warned (in Acts 20:29-30) of "fierce wolves" in the church. When Paul left Ephesus, there were still false teachers around, and Paul warned Timothy to be wary of them.
 - c) Churches grow stronger when they are being persecuted from outside. However, the Ephesian church was weakened because Satan raised false

teachers from within the church. Persecuted churches are inclined to get purer and be more united as the church is purged of such false teachers.

3. 1 Tim 1:4. False teaching of fables and endless debates on genealogy commonly cause much disputes. Christians like to speculate on difficult to understand verses which have less practical significance. This may be done out of curiosity, but it is time unwisely spent and may result in Christians giving excuses for not serving sacrificially because they have lesser or no more time left to serve.
4. 1 Tim 1:5 says that the aim of all that we teach is love. We ought to look for the needs of others and meet their needs.
5. 1 Tim 1:7. It is unfortunate, but no doubt true that most people would rather teach than serve. This is a Greek thinking. Jesus visited synagogues to preach and then He moved on. He did not start classes anywhere.
6. 1 Tim 1:8-11. The law was given to show sinners their sins. But Judaizers wanted Christians to obey the law. The Jews thought that the law was given for their salvation. Therefore, verse 11 says that they should turn to the Gospel. Even till today, there are some who still think that there are conditions required for salvation.
7. 1 Tim 1:20. Paul explicitly named two false teachers. It is fine to judge people's actions rather than their motives. We can never know one's motive (which only God can see), but we can certainly observe their actions. If we do not judge nor identify the false teachers, how then can the church avoid them?

Chapter 2

1. 1 Tim 2:1-4. Prayers are to be made for all men; in particular, for the rulers, that they will be wise to create peace. We can then reach out to unbelievers instead of spending time defending our faith. Most people complain more about their leaders or rulers rather than pray for them.
2. 1 Tim 2:9-13.
 - a) There were many women causing problems in the Ephesian church. Hence, Paul saw the need to give instructions to women.
 - b) Women are not to treat the church as a place to parade their fashionable wear. They are not to be seeking to look good but rather to do good works.
 - c) Women are not to exert authority over men. During those ancient Greek time, men tended to lord over their slaves. These rich women had many slaves to boss over, and thus, they started to boss over men in church.
 - d) It does not mean that women cannot talk in church, teach or lead but there is another extreme group of people who says that this is no longer applicable today. Therefore, we should take a moderate view. Women can teach but should not have authority over men; for example, they should not preach from the pulpit. Women can, however, lead in ministries for women and/or children.
 - e) Gender division is still prevalent even among Christians, and so is seniority. We should inculcate the good habit of respecting older men.

- f) Women ought to be dressed appropriately. That is, women should be dressed as women and men dressed as men. We are not to over-rule God's creation. Women can lead men (except their own husband) but in a lady-like manner.
- g) Only men can be pastors. If a woman becomes a pastor, they may struggle at home as they may become a motherly boss at home. Women leading in church will likely find it hard to submit to their husbands at home.

Chapter 3

Timothy met up with the elders who were teaching false doctrines.

1. 1 Tim 3:2. The term "overseer" means "bishop", which is found in the NKJV Bible.
2. 1 Tim 3:2-7 detailed the selection criteria of an overseer.
 - a) It focuses mainly on character traits. Teaching is the only one ability needed.
 - b) The elder must have Christ-like character and must rule his own household well. God parallels the church as a family and if the elder does not handle his own family well, the children's unruly behaviour will stumble others. This is especially important because during the early church days, the church typically met at the houses of elders.
3. 1 Tim 3:8-13 detailed the selection criteria of a deacon.
 - a) The same emphasis on character traits is expected, but there is no necessity for a deacon to have the ability to teach.
 - b) He must be the husband of one wife, which also implies that a deacon must be male.
 - c) He must also rule his own household well.
 - d) While the elder has to watch over the spiritual state of the church, the deacon's role is to manage the church administrative matters; hence, there is no need for a deacon to have the ability to teach.
 - e) It does not, however, mean that an elder is more senior in position than a deacon. We should note that a servant who cleans the tables well may be rewarded more than a preacher (or pastor) who does not do his work well. See 1 Corinthians 3:7-8.

Chapter 4

1. 1 Tim 4:3. An error of the church in Ephesus was the adoption of false teachings. They forbade marriage and commanded believers to abstain from certain foods. Their Greek thinking made them think that leaders should not get married because they had separated the spiritual realm from the physical. Marriage is invented by God, so it is a false teaching to say that a person will become more spiritual by abstaining from marriage or certain foods. The correct doctrine is that we will be more spiritual by becoming more like Christ!
2. 1 Tim 4:8. The Greeks valued sports greatly, such as the Olympics. So, they placed much emphasis towards the attainment of a great bodily physique through physical

exercises. Likewise in religion, these Greeks built muscular, god-like statues. Some exercises are good but we should not be overly obsessed with them.

3. 1 Tim 4:16. Some pastors spend 80% of their time towards preparing a sermon of 30 minutes. But Paul said that we are to “keep a close watch on yourself first and then to doctrine”. Sermons are likely to be forgotten by the audience but actions are seen and often remembered. It is the same with parents, because our children watch us. The book of 1 Timothy is not only for pastors. It is also for us all to influence the world in some ways.

Chapter 5

This chapter is written about widows.

1. 1 Tim 5:3-16.
 - a) It teaches on how we are to identify real widows and to give them the help they need.
 - b) This means that it is not just about teaching good doctrines. The church must seek to help those widows in need in practical ways.
 - c) We should also be alert that such help should be extended to those with genuine needs. The mercy ministry should not be taken advantage of. We must aim to impact the society but not be gullible.
2. 1 Tim 5:17-18 says, “Don’t muzzle an ox which treads out the grain!” We ought to take care of the financial needs of our church leaders and ‘feed them’.

Chapter 6

1. 1 Tim 6:1-2 talks about slavery.
 - a) Slaves were commonly owned in Roman households during that time. Slaves were not to rebel even when they became Christians. They should glorify God.
 - b) Christian masters were to treat their slaves well, which was truly a great reform of slavery! Eventually, slavery lost its impact in the Christian world. Christian masters eventually freed their slaves.
 - c) The best way to be free is not by rebellion but by a new heart.
2. 1 Tim 6:6-10. Godliness with contentment is great gain.
 - a) Basic food and clothing are sufficient.
 - b) Christians are to be beware of the love of money.
 - c) The best way to be rich is to be contented. When you are contented, the food you eat will taste good, your wife will look pretty to you, etc. Contentment leads to much satisfaction.
 - d) If you are greedy, you will not enjoy the 5,000 pairs of shoes you had already owned because you would still desire the one pair you cannot get. Do not be greedy leaders playing on people’s fears. Do not be religious crooks!
3. 1 Tim 6:17-19 teach that rich people should do good to store eternal treasures in heaven; to seek for satisfaction on Earth but look forward to rewards in heaven. We

should measure riches not by how much we have but by how much we give! True riches are in heaven.

What do we learn in the Book of First Timothy?

1. God did not tell us to hide from the world.
2. He cares for all aspects of our lives. Every part of our life is to be touched, and we are to look to Jesus as our example to do good!
3. Jesus led a life that is practical, not just “spiritual” church-like. We are not just to behave well in the house of God. We ought not to just sit in classrooms, but be about doing charity.
4. We can enjoy the blessings of our family, work, etc. and have an abundant life while on Earth.