

Letters For Leaders – 1 Timothy (Part 4)

The four letters we are studying in this series were written by the Apostle Paul, probably while he was in prison toward the end of his ministry. They are unique among all his writings because they are PERSONAL, addressed to individuals in leadership roles rather than to churches as a whole. Also, Paul has had a “mentoring role” in the lives and ministries of each of these young leaders, so he feels at liberty to speak freely. Here more than anywhere else we see Paul being transparent about ministry.

The apostle Paul made discipling the next generation his central focus. In addition to his letters to Philemon (who hosts an “ekklesia” in his home in Colossae) and Titus (who pastors the church on the island of Crete), **ONE-THIRD of the New Testament was either written to Timothy, or from Paul and Timothy** (see the first verse of 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon). So Paul's lifelong investment in the next generation of Apostolics is reflected even in the very structure of Scripture, and yet we often overlook this principle.

Paul's mentoring relationship with Timothy begins in Acts 16 ...

Acts 16:1-5 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Timothy and his family were most likely converted through Paul's ministry when the apostle first visited Lystra. His mother and grandmother raised him to love truth, preparing him from a very young age for his eventual call to ministry (2 Timothy 1:15). Note that Paul experienced a very dramatic moment when he was called (Acts 9), but **Timothy basically “grew” into his calling**. Someone said, “God called Paul, and Paul called Timothy!” – and it's certainly true that Paul had a lot to do with it.

As a young man, Timothy undoubtedly witnessed Paul's sufferings in Lystra (Acts 14:19-20, 2 Timothy 3:10-11) and was drawn to the apostle. Paul later ordained him to the ministry (2 Timothy 1:6), and he became Paul's favorite traveling companion and coworker on his missionary journeys. Paul invested his life in Timothy, and even called him his own “son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2, 1 Corinthians 4:17, Philippians 2:22).

In the years that followed, Timothy played an important role in the expansion and strengthening of the New Testament church. He sometimes served as Paul's ambassador to “trouble spots” like Corinth, where the church had problems; he eventually became pastor of the church in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3); and he no doubt joined Paul in Rome shortly before the imprisoned Apostle was martyred (1 Timothy 4:21).

But Timothy's first lesson in leadership came at the very beginning of his ministry. Once Paul chose him to join the missionary team, he had Timothy go through the Jewish ritual of circumcision! This action seems to contradict the earlier decision of the Jerusalem council, which concluded that Gentile believers did NOT have to be circumcised. Furthermore, to require Timothy to be circumcised seems a bit hypocritical since Paul would not even allow Titus to be circumcised!

Acts 15:28-29 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

Galatians 2:3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

However, there was an important spiritual principle behind Paul's decision, and one that Timothy certainly needed to learn. Paul very clearly taught that circumcision had nothing to do with SALVATION, as the Jerusalem council had also declared. That's precisely why he would not allow Titus to be circumcised – because Titus was a Gentile, and that would have appeared to side with the Judaizers (who taught that Gentile Christians had to obey all the Jewish ceremonial laws to be saved).

However, Timothy came from a different background than Titus. We're clearly told in Acts 16:1 that he was the son of a Jewish mother AND a Gentile father. Furthermore, Paul wanted him to work with Jewish AND Gentile churches as they traveled, and it was essential that he not offend either of them. **It was not Timothy's SALVATION that was at issue, it was his fitness for SERVICE in leadership and ministry**. Why does Paul make this distinction? Because leaders must always be held to a higher standard than followers! Paul taught that a leader's personal freedom must be balanced by a strong sense of public responsibility.

1 Corinthians 10:32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

1 Corinthians 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

Paul's epistles to Timothy continue his role of mentoring a young leader:

1 Timothy 1:1-4 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope; Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.

Ephesus was not an easy place to pastor a church. The city was devoted to the worship of the goddess Diana, and worship in her temples promoted sexual immorality of all kinds (Acts 19). In spite of this, Paul spent nearly three years there, and had done a great work, so that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:10).

Paul uses the military term "charge" ("to give strict orders from a superior officer") eight times in his two letters to Timothy to let him know how serious his task is. The first time is in 1:3, where his order is "teach no other doctrine!" There are more than thirty references to doctrine and teaching in Paul's personal epistles, because DOCTRINE was the foundation of the early church.

The false teaching Timothy is facing is the same thing Titus faced in Crete – "fables and endless genealogies" (1:4). The false teachers were using the Old Testament Law, and especially the genealogies, to manufacture all kinds of new doctrines and spiritual theories. They were leading people astray and causing them to question the doctrine they had been taught. It was the opposite of "godly edifying" (1:4) – teaching that leads to godliness. It appealed to the flesh, and that's why the false teachers had a following – but it was not the gospel Paul had preached, and so he dismisses it as "vain jangling" (1:6).

1 Timothy 1:5-11 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

The END ("result, goal") of obeying God's commandments will always be LOVE ("charity"), PURITY ("pure heart"), CONVICTION ("good conscience"), and INTEGRITY ("faith unfeigned"). You can't obtain this just by keeping rules, but you also can't obtain it by ignoring God's rules! **LEGALISM can be either RELYING on keeping rules to save ourselves, or REWRITING God's rules to please ourselves.** Either way, legalism gives an "appearance" of a relationship with God, but there is no corresponding reality in the inner man.

Because these false teachers were abusing the Old Testament law, Paul explains the role of God's commandments in our salvation. He says, "The Law is GOOD, if we understand it properly." The Law was given to expose sin and convict sinners. The Law cannot save anyone, but without it we would never see our need of a Savior. Once we are saved, we don't need LAW any more, because we now have GRACE – and grace is a "higher law" than the Law, because it comes from inward transformation, not just from outward compliance.

Paul lists fourteen kinds of people who were condemned by the Law, centered especially on five of the ten commandments – honor your parents, don't kill, don't commit adultery, don't steal, and don't lie. This is one of several such lists in the New Testament, and these are some of the sinful people the Law was made for.

The Law and the Gospel go together. The Law without the Gospel is like diagnosing a disease without having a cure, but the Gospel without the Law is like having a cure but never admitting you have a disease. Either way, it's fatal without having the "glorious gospel" (1:11).

1 Timothy 1:12-17 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

All this talk about the Gospel moves Paul to share his testimony. He thanks God for ENABLING him, and tells us that God's main qualification for ministry is FAITHFULNESS. Paul used to be a blasphemer (denying Jesus' deity), a persecutor, and "injurious" (a "bully") to the church – but God was merciful to him because he was doing it ignorantly.

Paul thanks God for His grace, which was “exceeding abundant” in his case because he had been an enemy of the church. He also is thankful for the “longsuffering” of God toward him, and calls it “a pattern to them which should hereafter believe” (1:16). Literally Paul is saying, “If God could save ME, God can save ANYBODY.”

And notice how Paul’s many trials have affected him throughout his ministry. They have altered his perception of how powerful, intelligent and good he is; they have made him feel helpless, dependent and conscious of his weaknesses. And this has been a GOOD thing!

- In his first epistle (Galatians 1:1), Paul introduced himself as “**Paul, an apostle**”
- After some suffering (1 Corinthians 15:9), he said that he was “**the least of the apostles**”
- After more suffering (Ephesians 3:8), he felt that he was “**less than the least of all saints**”
- After suffering in prison (1 Timothy 1:15), Paul declared “Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinners; of whom I am chief**”

Do you see what was happening in his life? **Paul kept getting smaller and Jesus kept getting bigger.** He decreased, Jesus increased. And this is why Paul worships JESUS as “the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God” (1:17).

1 Timothy 1:18-20 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Here is Paul’s military talk again (“this charge”) – “Timothy, hold on to the prophetic words that have been spoken over you, and FIGHT!” He then says to hold on to faith AND a good conscience (“conviction”). It is not enough just to proclaim our faith with our LIPS, we must practice our faith with our LIVES. Christians who “make shipwreck” of their lives nearly always do so by sinning against their conscience. They change their lifestyle convictions, and then eventually you will see them change their doctrine. Hymenaeus and Alexander did this, deliberately rejecting their godly convictions in an attempt to defend their ungodly lives. **Bad doctrine starts with bad conduct, and usually with secret sin.**

Paul delivers these men “unto Satan” because of their willful sin. With the protection of the church removed, hopefully they would feel the full force of their sin and repent. **It’s not bad when backsliders have trouble!**

1 Timothy 2:1-4 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Because of the battles faced by the church against the world, the flesh and the devil, Paul exhorts that PRAYER should be our FIRST priority:

- **SUPPLICATION.** (Greek – “deomai”) has to do with ASKING, but extends the idea further. Asking merely makes our request known, but supplicating is to ask with passion, persistence and focus. The root word is “deo” which means “to bind something up or tie something up.” This is speaking of our authority in the Spirit!

***Matthew 16:19** And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

- **PRAYERS.** Prayer doesn’t always feel dramatic or dynamic. Much of God’s work in our lives and in the world around us takes place more gradually, through faithful and consistent daily praying. Remember the “hornets” God sent to drive out Israel’s enemies, even when they were unaware that God’s “Bee Team” was at work!

***Joshua 24:12** And I sent the hornet before you, which drave them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow.*

- **INTERCESSIONS.** Intercession means to literally “stand in the gap.” It occurs when we realize that God has ordained boundaries of blessing and UNLESS SOMEONE PRAYS Satan will try to violate the boundary line! Then once sin has entered, God’s judgment must eventually fall – UNLESS SOMEONE PRAYS. We are Heaven’s on-site representatives to pray, “Thy Kingdom come! Thy will be done!”

***Ezekiel 22:30** And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.*

- **GIVING OF THANKS.** We don’t just come to God with a “wish list” – we pray because we want to have a RELATIONSHIP with God! Part of our prayer should always reflect THANKFULNESS to God for who He is and what He has done in our lives.

***Psalms 100:4** Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.*

Paul instructs us to pray “for ALL men; for kings, and for all that are in authority.” (Remember that godless Emperor Nero was on the throne at this time!) No person is beyond the reach of prayer! **The directive here is to pray for issues that are grander and broader than our own immediate points of personal concern or involvement!** Prayer is not to be a preoccupied, self-centered concern. Not when we can literally affect the climate of our culture (“that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life” – 1:2) and create an atmosphere where people can “come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1:4). **The Gospel is always our ultimate goal.**

1 Timothy 2:5-7 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

We cannot “mediate” between God and another individual. We cannot command angels to intervene. **But we pray to a God who can do both!** Since there is only ONE God, there is only ONE mediator. The whole reason God came to earth was to intervene where sin had destroyed. When we pray, it is not that we are winning the victory through more effort; rather, we are ENFORCING the victory that Jesus already won!

We are HEAVEN’S AMBASSADORS in this world, and it is for exactly this reason that our lifestyle should reflect the doctrine we believe and the faith we say we have. **Praying for God to do what WE want when we won’t do what HE wants is the ultimate hypocrisy!**

1 Timothy 2:8-10 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

Paul identifies some “challenge areas” for men and women concerning HOLINESS, which is simply letting the HOLY SPIRIT control our lives. Notice that they are different, because we are different in our creation:

The MAN’S primary problem areas with holiness are:

- Appetite (holy hands)
- Anger (wrath)
- Apathy (doubting)

The WOMAN’S primary problem areas with holiness are:

- Adornment (adorn themselves ... with ... not with)
- Apparel (modest apparel)
- Attitude (shamefacedness and sobriety)

Notice that men in Scripture are basically commanded to ACT holy, because when men ACT holy, women are less likely to be tempted. Women are basically commanded to APPEAR holy, because when women APPEAR holy, men are less likely to be tempted. This is not to say that women never have problems with inner holiness, or that men never have problems with outer holiness. These are tendencies only, because of the distinct natures the sexes were created with. For both men and women, holiness begins on the inside and must be demonstrated on the outside.

God’s HOLY people always stand out! Apostolic women will generally stand out more by their APPEARANCE, and Apostolic men will generally stand out more by their ACTIONS. Real Christian men should be just as DISTINCT from the world as real Christian women!

MEN’S holiness standards provide much, if not most, of the OFFENSIVE power of the Apostolic church. This is “**DUNAMIS**” (“doing”) power, and the Gifts of the Spirit operate from this kind of power. **WOMEN’S** holiness standards provide much, if not most, of the DEFENSIVE power of the Apostolic church. This is “**EXOUSIA**” (“restraining”) power, and the Fruit of the Spirit operates from this kind of power. **Our roles are not competitive, they are complementary!**

1 Timothy 2:11-12 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

Paul now speaks directly to women about their place of “subjection.” This is another military term meaning “under command of a leader.” The word “silence” doesn’t mean not speaking; rather it means “quietness, one who does not meddle in the affairs of others.” He is simply saying that women should serenely accept their place in God’s order of creation, their role as a helpmeet to their husbands, and their responsibility in matters of outward adorning.

Paul does not allow women to “teach” (“discharge the office of a teacher”), but since he later commands older women to teach younger women (Titus 2:3-4) and commends Timothy for being taught by his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15), he is obviously referring only to women “lording it over” men in matters of church leadership. This is in accordance with their role.

Greek scholar Marvin Treese teaches that Paul’s command for a woman not to “usurp authority” over men means she is not to “use her self-weapon” (i.e. her femininity) to manipulate men. This powerful “weapon” is one of the major reasons she is to be godly in apparel and adornment!

1 Timothy 2:13-15 For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

The greatest reason for a godly woman to assume a spiritual posture of submission is simply God's order of creation ("for Adam was FIRST formed, then Eve" – 2:13). However, another compelling reason is the role the woman played in the fall ("and Adam was NOT deceived, but the woman BEING deceived was in the transgression" – 2:14). The reason Eve fell was because she usurped her husband's headship!

The Bible specifically points out that, while Eve was DECEIVED, Adam sinned WILLINGLY. When she returned to him with the forbidden fruit, she was already dying! Adam could see and sense the difference in her, but he loved her! What was he to do? In that moment, Adam MADE A CHOICE to join Eve in eating the fruit, thus joining her in her sin.

Even in the fall of man we see a beautiful picture of Jesus, who knew we were dying in sin; but He loved us, and chose to partake of sinful humanity so that we could be saved! That's LOVE!

Paul concludes by this chapter by reaffirming the woman's role. ("notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing" – 2:15). Even though the woman was the initial agent who led the human race into sin, through childbearing she is freed from that stigma because she is raising a generation of godly children. This is a great motivation for her holiness.

Women are just as qualified for LEADERSHIP as men, but the sexes in general don't lead the same way – regardless of what management books say! **IN CHRIST**, there is neither "male nor female" (Galatians 3:28). But **IN LEADERSHIP**, we need to be aware of our unique strengths and weaknesses, and our different roles and responsibilities. Thank God for EVERY member of His Body!