



1 Timothy: A vital word for the 21st Century world

Paul's Encouragement to Timothy (and us)

1 Timothy 4:15-16 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. ¹⁶ Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Value of preaching the Pastoral Epistles

Theological value

Pastoral value

Engaging and transformational

Preaching 1 Timothy

The purpose of 1 Timothy: A Positive Vision of Creation-Affirming Christian living that aligns with the gospel

From Paul to Timothy in Ephesus

Timothy: Son of Jewish Christian mother and Greek (probably unbelieving) father (Acts 16:1)

Met Paul in Lystra (probably converted there):

c. 48–51 Paul visits Lystra; chooses Timothy as mission companion (Acts 16:1–3)

Timothy emerged as notable among disciples in Lystra (cf. Acts 16:1–3).

Close personal relationship with Paul, highly thought of by Paul (1 Cor 4:17; Phil 2:22)

Involved in ministry with Paul in many ways and places as a trusted co-worker

Mentioned elsewhere (e.g. 1 Thess 3:2; involved in writing 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philemon)

For the church

1 Timothy 4:6 If you put these things **before the brothers** ...

1 Timothy 6:21 Grace be with you [plural]

Occasion and Purpose of the letter

Occasion

1 Timothy 1:3

Occasion: False teachers who denied the goodness of God's created order as described in the Old Testament

1 Timothy 4:1-5

Purpose

1 Timothy 3:15 you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

(hence e.g. 1 Timothy 5:1-2)

Our purpose for our own hearers

Key themes in 1 Timothy

Christology: Emphasis on humanity

1 Timothy 2:5-6

1 Timothy 3:16

Soteriology and ethics: emphasis on godly life now

1 Timothy 1:13-16

1 Timothy 1:1

1 Timothy 6:14-16

1 Timothy 1:19

Conduct of believers in Christian community and church

The pastoral ministry of the Christian church



Suggestions for preaching each section

1:3–11

Engaging with Bible isn't just about words and arguments but teaches us to repent of sin and live in a godly way

1:12–17

Salvation is by grace: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners

1:18–20

Grace leads to godliness

2:1–7

How to relate to the world around us: pray, because God and salvation are for all, not just our exclusive group

2:8–15

How we act in gathered worship needs to reflect our good, created relationships

3:1–13

The lives of our leaders are core to their task: godliness is primary for a household leader

3:14–4:5

The gospel of Christ does not deny the goodness of creation but affirms it—including good “household” relationships

4:6–16

What to look for in a good minister: an example of godliness, life and right teaching

5:1–16



Relating to the church as a household / family, especially honouring older women like mothers who have run and served in households should be honoured

5:17-25

Ordering and honour of elders (like fathers of households): importance of proper processes for assessing wrongdoing

6:1-2

How economic restriction is an opportunity to serve the Lord rather than something always to fight

6:3-10

The sickness to diagnose and watch out for in false teachers, especially in their relationship with money

6:11-16

Living godly lives now in light of the future courtroom of God

6:17-19

The gospel-transformed attitude to wealth: not loving it, not rejecting it as evil, but using it as an opportunity to love and serve



General dangers to avoid

Don't skim over the doctrinal content

Be honest but unapologetic

Some particular challenges

Scholarly issue: Not written by Paul?

Our assumptions about age and motherhood affect our positive reception of the passage about widows (1 Tim 5:3–16)

The puzzling language (and meaning!) of the passage about younger widows (1 Tim 5:11–15)

Ignatius, to the Smyrnians 13:1a: I greet the households of my brothers with their wives and children, and the *virgins* who are called *widows*.



Rebuking sinning elders (or potential elders):
The danger of preaching it without actually
doing it (5:19–22)

Critiquing false teachers, especially prosperity
theology and financial corruption (6:3–5)

Addressing slavery: (6:1–2)

Gender / men and women (e.g., 1 Tim 2:8–15)



Recommended Readings

Theology of the Pastoral Epistles

Smith, Claire. *The Appearing of God Our Savior: A Theology of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*. NTT. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2025.

My endorsement: “Claire Smith has gifted us with a remarkable resource that delves into the theological and pastoral depths of Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus. Often these letters are viewed only through the lens of specific debates. However, Smith skillfully encourages us to take a broader perspective, highlighting how the letters convey profound truths about the God who saves us from sin and death through his Son, Jesus Christ. Smith connects these truths to the practical realities of human relationships, church life, and pastoral ministry. While clearly the result of her thorough exegetical analysis and scholarly expertise, the book remains clear, accessible, and highly engaging.”

Full technical commentaries dealing with the Greek language for exegesis:

Mounce, William D. *Pastoral Epistles*. WBC. Thomas Nelson, 2000.

Marshall, I. Howard. *The Pastoral Epistles*. ICC. T&T Clark, 1999.

Plus many more at bestcommentaries.com.

Semi-technical commentaries dealing more broadly with themes:

Köstenberger, Andreas. *1-2 Timothy and Titus*. EBTC. Lexham, 2020.

Towner, Philip H. *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. NICNT. Eerdmans, 2006.

Plus many more at bestcommentaries.com.

Occasion of the Pastoral Epistles (especially 1 Timothy), including critique of “Artemis background” theory

Dillon T. Thornton, *Hostility in the House of God: An Investigation of the Opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy*, BBRSup 15 (Eisenbrauns, 2016).

Lyn M. Kidson, “Review of Sandra L. Glahn’s ‘Nobody’s Mother: Artemis of the Ephesians in Antiquity and the New Testament.’ Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2023.,” *Engendered Ideas*, 1 January 2024,

<https://engenderedideas.wordpress.com/2024/01/01/review-of-sandra-l-glahns-nobodys-mother-artemis-of-the-ephesians-in-antiquity-and-the-new-testament-downers-grove-il-intervarsity-press-2023/>

Specific scholarly articles on 1 Timothy 5:11–16 (I don’t agree with everything here but they are very helpful!)

John M. G. Barclay, “Household Networks and Early Christian Economics: A Fresh Study of 1 Timothy 5:3–16,” *New Testament Studies* 66.2 (2020): 268–87.

Lyn M. Kidson, “Real Widows, Young Widows and the Limits of Benefaction in 1 Timothy 5:3–16,” *Australian Biblical Review* 70 (2022): 83–100.

Scholarly Resources (lots!!)

www.pastoralepistles.com

“Pastoral Epistles is an academic biblioblog which focuses on the New Testament letters 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, commonly known as the Pastoral Epistles. It functions primarily to keep students of the letters apprised of recent research published on the letters. It was loosely associated with the Pastoral Epistles study group which was part of the Evangelical Theological Society, running from 2011–2021.”