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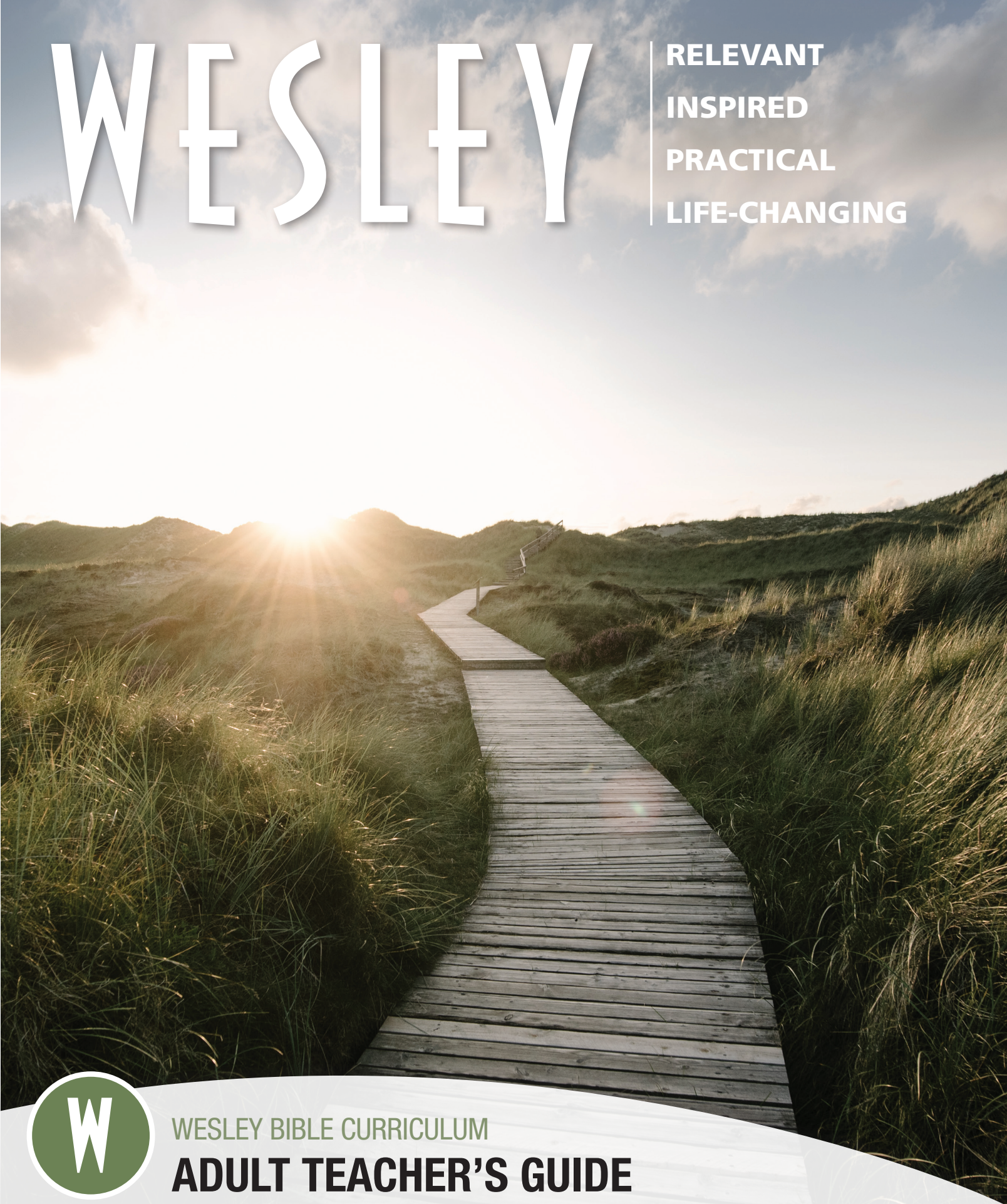

WESLEY BIBLE CURRICULUM

ADULT TEACHER'S GUIDE

Faith at Work in Christ's Family: Paul's Letters to Timothy and Titus

June–August 2019

WESLEY Adult Bible Studies

Volume 130 No. 4

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Sons and Daughters of Faith

Timothy and Titus—Paul identified each as a "true son in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2; see also 2 Tim. 2:1; Titus 1:4). To be certain, Paul was used by God to lead them to the new birth of salvation, so they were in a very practical sense his born-again children—his spiritual sons. But just as should be the case with biological parenthood, there was more to their relationship than just bringing them into new life. Paul was their mentor, guide, and friend.

As we study Paul's God-inspired direction and teaching to his spiritual sons, watch how God likewise inspired him to lead these leaders. Paul was a model for how we should lead our own sons and daughters of faith today. His counsel, advice, and challenges are no less directed by God's Spirit to our modern Timothys and Tituses, though all of our circumstances are different. More so, these truths challenge us to pass along the same spiritual and practical theology to our own children of faith.

God led Paul to communicate these truths no less to our own spiritual sons and daughters. How we model, teach, and apply those truths is as personal and relevant for us today as it was for Paul.

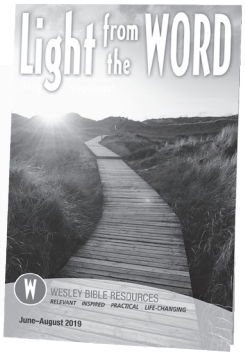
Let us in these weeks to come be trained, and furthermore be used by God to train up others, as daughters and sons of faith.

Wesleyan Publishing House Editorial Team

PS: Visit **wphstore.com** for more great Bible study resources.

Bible Study Tip—

You will deepen your reflection on these lessons by reading *Light from the Word* each day throughout the week. This helpful, daily devotional follows the theme of each week's lesson with a relevant, practical message aimed at sharpening your spiritual life. You'll be immersed in these Scriptures and related passages every day.



How to Use the Wesley Bible Studies Teacher's Guide

Evaluate offers the opportunity for you to review the important truths from last week's lesson and discuss the most relevant applications students saw throughout the week.

Engage includes suggested activities aimed at getting your students to think, discuss, react, or in some way participate in the lesson.

Examine draws students into the study of Scripture. Here they will look closely at the scriptural content, coming to know what the Bible says. There may be more information than you have time to use in class, but it will be helpful for you as you prepare for the lesson.

Explore guides students in processing the Bible content and grappling with its implications for their lives.

Exercise helps you guide students to take action on the truth they have discovered.

One-Year Bible Reading Plan

By reading about fifteen minutes each day, you can read every chapter of the Bible in one year. Begin anytime!

JUNE

1. 2 Samuel 14–15
2. 2 Samuel 16–18
3. 2 Samuel 19–20
4. 2 Samuel 21–22
5. 2 Samuel 23–24
6. Galatians 1–3
7. Galatians 4–6
8. 1 Kings 1–2
9. 1 Kings 3–5
10. 1 Kings 6–7
11. 1 Kings 8–9
12. 1 Kings 10–12
13. 1 Kings 13–15
14. 1 Kings 16–18
15. 1 Kings 19–20
16. 1 Kings 21–22
17. Ephesians 1–3
18. Ephesians 4–6
19. 2 Kings 1–3
20. 2 Kings 4–5
21. 2 Kings 6–8
22. 2 Kings 9–11
23. 2 Kings 12–14
24. 2 Kings 15–17
25. 2 Kings 18–20
26. 2 Kings 21–23
27. 2 Kings 24–25
28. Philippians 1–4
29. 1 Chronicles 1–2
30. 1 Chronicles 3–5

JULY

1. 1 Chronicles 6–7
2. 1 Chronicles 8–10
3. 1 Chronicles 11–13
4. 1 Chronicles 14–16
5. 1 Chronicles 17–20
6. 1 Chronicles 21–23
7. 1 Chronicles 24–26
8. 1 Chronicles 27–29
9. Colossians 1–4
10. 2 Chronicles 1–4
11. 2 Chronicles 5–7
12. 2 Chronicles 8–11
13. 2 Chronicles 12–16
14. 2 Chronicles 17–19
15. 2 Chronicles 20–22
16. 2 Chronicles 23–25
17. 2 Chronicles 26–29
18. 2 Chronicles 30–32
19. 2 Chronicles 33–34
20. 2 Chronicles 35–36
21. 1 Thessalonians 1–5
22. Ezra 1–4
23. Ezra 5–7
24. Ezra 8–10
25. Nehemiah 1–4
26. Nehemiah 5–7
27. Nehemiah 8–10
28. Nehemiah 11–13
29. 2 Thessalonians 1–3
30. Esther 1–4
31. Esther 5–10

AUGUST

1. Job 1–4
2. Job 5–8
3. Job 9–12
4. Job 13–17
5. Job 18–21
6. Job 22–26
7. Job 27–30
8. Job 31–34
9. Job 35–38
10. Job 39–42
11. 1 Timothy 1–6
12. 2 Timothy 1–4
13. Psalms 1–7
14. Psalms 8–14
15. Psalms 15–18
16. Psalms 19–24
17. Psalms 25–30
18. Psalms 31–34
19. Psalms 35–37
20. Psalms 38–42
21. Psalms 43–48
22. Psalms 49–54
23. Psalms 55–60
24. Psalms 61–67
25. Psalms 68–71
26. Psalms 72–75
27. Psalms 76–78
28. Psalms 79–84
29. Psalms 85–89
30. Psalms 90–95
31. Psalms 96–102

Key Verse
I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience.

—1 Timothy 1:16

Scripture
1 Timothy 1:1–17

Lesson Focus
God's grace is the basis for our relationship with him.

Check Out . . .

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4
Unit: 4
Lesson: 1
Activity: Life Graph
Page: 296

God's Abundant Provision of Grace

Engage SESSION OVERVIEW

God is a holy God and has given his holy law to humankind in order to establish a relationship with us. While that law has been effective in identifying sin in the ungodly, it has never been adequate to produce inward holiness in his people. And yet we have a tendency to misuse it as a kind of "club" to keep one another in line. But God is also loving, and his relationship to us in the new covenant is built on grace. Even the worst of sinners can be made right with God not by adherence to the law, but by faith in God's provision of grace through Christ Jesus.

Examine INTRODUCTION

Try to imagine a world without any laws. What would life be like? If everyone did what was right in his or her own eyes, our world would be in serious trouble. Laws keep people in line and create order, structure, and security.

Now try to imagine a world without any grace. Without grace, the world would be harsh, oppressive, rigid, and unforgiving. Unfortunately, it sounds all too familiar, as grace is a rare commodity today, even within the church.

God is not at fault. He established his law with the world through Moses, but he demonstrated his grace to the world through Jesus. And his grace is still available to all who will call upon him in faith.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EVALUATE Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share encouragement or words of truth they received from the study.

ENGAGE **Opening**
Use a chart and topical Bible to contrast and compare the terms law and grace.

EXAMINE **Background**
Paul first met Timothy in Derbe (see Acts 16:1). He became a believer through the godly influence of his Jewish mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois (see 2 Tim. 1:5). We are not told that Timothy's Greek father was a believer; only that he had resisted the Jewish custom of circumcision for his son Timothy (see Acts 16:3). In fact, the subsequent bonding between Paul and the younger man (see Phil. 2:22) suggests that Timothy's father was no longer in the picture.

The partnership between Paul and Timothy was close and based on complete trust. At various times, Paul referred to Timothy as son (see 1 Cor. 4:17 and in these Pastoral Epistles to Timothy), brother (see 2 Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Philem. 1), co-worker (see Rom. 16:21; 1 Thess. 3:2), and servant of Christ (see Phil. 1:1). Timothy became a part of Paul's missionary team (see Acts 20:4; 2 Cor. 1:19; Phil. 2:22; Philem. 1)—acting sometimes as anchor (see Acts 17:14–15), sometimes as ambassador (see Acts 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 3:2, 6).

Timothy was with Paul during one imprisonment (see Philem.1) and was in prison on his own account at least one time (see Heb. 13:23). When Paul was taken as prisoner in Rome, he sent Timothy to Ephesus. His letters to Timothy were written during this period and focused on Timothy's pastoral role—encouraging and guiding the younger man as he dealt with problems in the Ephesian church. At the close of the second letter, Paul urged Timothy to join him in Rome because Demas had forsaken Paul, and his other coworkers were off on their own missions (see 2 Tim. 4:9–10). It is thought that after Paul's death, Timothy returned to Ephesus as pastor and then bishop, and that he was martyred there at the end of the first century.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXAMINE ONE: Recruit a student to present a report on Paul's relationship to Timothy, using the book of Acts as well as Paul's letters. Give the reporter three to five minutes to tell the class what he or she discovered.

1:1 *command.* Paul called himself an apostle by the commandment of God. He didn't claim authority on his own merit but by God's choosing him to be God's voice.

1:2 *Grace, mercy and peace.* From an early history of zealously promoting the concept that the way to God's favor is through works, Paul became an even more zealous apostle of grace. Central to his mission was the truth that God has extended grace and mercy to us, even though we do not deserve it.

God's Abundant Provision of Grace

ONE: What are the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 1:1–2)?

KJV	*NIV*
1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope; **2** Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.	**1** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, **2** To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Among Paul's many letters written to various churches throughout the Mediterranean, several were written to individuals. Three of these letters, two to Timothy and one to Titus, have come to be known as the Pastoral Epistles, due in part to the guidance Paul offered them as pastors as well as the concern he expressed toward the churches they oversaw. The timing of these letters, however, does not coincide with any of the events of the book of Acts that record Paul's ministry. Nevertheless, it is generally conceded that Paul was eventually released from his first Roman imprisonment and that he carried on additional apostolic ministry until his martyrdom under Nero (around AD 67). In 2 Timothy, Paul anticipated that event to be imminent.

Paul considered himself to be **an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God** (1 Tim. 1:1). From the moment of his conversion on the road to Damascus, he knew God had placed an unmistakable call upon his life to take the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles. That calling was ultimately recognized and confirmed by the other apostles in Jerusalem. But Paul did not need their confirmation. He already had God's.

On his first missionary journey, Paul traveled through Lystra, where Timothy was just a young man at the time. Both Timothy's mother and grandmother became strong believers. By the time of Paul's second journey through Lystra in Acts 16, he had recruited the young Timothy to join him in ministry. Paul became a mentor to Timothy, but even more than that, Paul regarded him as a **true son in the faith** (v. 2). As time wore on, Paul even entrusted Timothy with subsidiary missions (see Acts 19:22). Paul's affection for Timothy was evident in the fact that Paul included him in the salutation of his letters to five different churches.

PERSONAL NOTES

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. Tell about an apostle figure in your life who mentored you in your Christian development.
2. Whom are you mentoring in both faith and ministry?

TWO: Beware of false teachers of the law (1 Tim. 1:3–11).

KJV	NIV
3 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,	**3** As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer
4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.	**4** or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work—which is by faith.
5 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:	**5** The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.
6 From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling;	**6** Some have departed from these and have turned to meaningless talk.
7 Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.	**7** They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.
8 But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully;	**8** We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.
9 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,	**9** We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers,
10 For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;	**10** for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE One

1. Calls for a personal response, but could include parents, pastors, or other mature Christians who have contributed to one's spiritual growth and development.

2. Calls for a personal response. Be sure the class members are thinking of their own children and grandchildren as well as others they may be mentoring.

EXAMINE **TWO:** Lead your class through this passage one verse at a time, analyzing, interpreting, and applying each verse in order. Summarize and fine-tune your findings. Avoid taking verses out of context and the danger of drawing more substantial conclusions than reasonable.

1:3 *false doctrines.* Paul did not specify the false doctrines being propagated in Ephesus. Rather, he focused on their controversial nature. While there is room within the church community for differences of opinion, controversy implies contention and division (see James 4:1). A controversy results when each party to a discussion entrenches behind a staunchly held position and cannot retreat because of pride. In a sincere search for truth, love (see 1 Tim 1:5) is not displaced by anger and alienation. The danger of "theological" discussions is that they keep the truths of God on a theoretical rather than practical level.

1:4 *myths.* The Ephesian church was planted in a city where the major industry was the worship of the goddess Diana (Artemis). In such a thoroughly pagan atmosphere, the church was highly habituated to mythology. One of the heresies this led to was the belief that the way to God was mysterious and that it involved worship of angels (see Col. 2:8, 18). By embellishing Old Testament accounts, false teachers turned the truth into myths, thus weakening its impact and creating much controversy. Anyone who has taught a Sunday school class of children who get their biblical facts from movies should be able to understand the problem.

1:4 *endless genealogies;* "meaningless talk" (v. 6). To the Jews of Paul's time, ancestry was everything. Paul saw the resulting endless and undoubtedly scholarly discussions as a complete waste of time.

1:5 *goal of this command.* Paul referred to all of the above commands. As Timothy's spiritual father and ministry mentor, Paul had the right and the responsibility to "lay down the law." One of the prerequisites of ministry is the willingness to be held accountable to a spiritual mentor—to accept and respond when a trusted person speaks truth into the minister's life. Paul was not on a power trip. He earnestly wanted to see the fruits of love in Timothy and in the lives of the people he loved in Ephesus. These fruits are a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith (see also Acts 23:1; Heb. 10:22).

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

1:6 *departed; turned.* Paul had seen firsthand the effects of false doctrine, beginning with his own training as a Pharisee. Note the use of the word *departed*. Paul used the Greek word for "departed" again in 1 Timothy 6:2 and 2 Timothy 2:18. In both cases Paul referred to those who adopted false teaching and who departed from the faith.

1:7 *teachers of the law . . . do not know.* Good teaching cannot come from a desire for prestige and power. The task of teaching is a divine appointment (see Eph. 4:11), demands exemplary living (see Rom. 2:17–23; James 3:1), and implies spiritual maturity (see Heb. 5:12).

1:8 *good if.* The best doctrine can be warped by improper application (see Matt. 5:19).

1:8–9 *law.* Paul saw that the law can be good if used properly, but it can also be abused and misinterpreted. He stated that the law was not made for good people—they don't need it because they already choose to do good. So for us as Christians trying to walk with the Lord, the law is not to be our focus. The Lord, who is good, is to be our focus.

1:9 *law . . . for lawbreakers and rebels.* Laws are necessary because of sin. In a perfect world, guidelines, rightly followed, would be adequate—and there would be no need for enforcement. But we do not live in a perfect world, and the less perfect it becomes, the more laws are necessary in order to prevent complete chaos (see Rom. 4:15; 13:1).

1:10 *the sexually immoral* ["whoremongers," KJV]. The Greek word *pornos* refers to sexual sin in whatever form it takes. The word is based on the Greek word *pernemi*, which means "to sell."

1:10 *slave traders* ["menstealers," KJV]. The Greek word is a compound word that literally means "bring men to their feet," implying enslavement by force. This seems to be the only occurrence of this word in Scripture, although the principle of Old Testament law permitted a type of temporary and basically voluntary bondage for those who could find no other way to resolve their debts (see Lev. 25:39–43).

1:10 *contrary to the sound doctrine.* In this context, the word *doctrine* goes beyond theoretical theology to practical life application—the way a person lives.

1:11 *conforms to the gospel.* Any reference to the gospel reverts to the most essential facts of the Christian message—that Jesus died so sinners might live (see Rom. 1:15–17). God's amazing grace is always at its center.

God's Abundant Provision of Grace

KJV	NIV
11 According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.	**11** that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

The church in Ephesus had a problem. Certain men within the church were leading people astray by their teaching. The various descriptions Paul used of their teaching include **false doctrines**, **myths**, **endless genealogies, controversial speculations**, and **meaningless talk** (vv. 3–4, 6). Isn't it interesting how easily people can be led astray by a zealous and passionate teacher, no matter how bizarre his or her teaching might be? We may remember Jonestown and Waco. In addition, a host of less notorious examples may come to mind of good Christian people buying in to the outlandish claims of a false teacher. In Paul's second letter to Timothy, Paul warned Timothy that "the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths" (2 Tim. 4:3–4).

Timothy was instructed by Paul to remain in Ephesus, where Timothy might be able to command those people to refrain from their activities. Although Timothy was not an apostle, he was respected because of his association with Paul. And apparently he was successful in his efforts, for the Lord's commendation to this church in Revelation 2:1–7 includes the fact that they had been faithful in rejecting the claims of false teachers.

Among other things, these false teachers attempted to convince the people that they were **teachers of the law** (1 Tim. 1:7). Apparently they were knowledgeable about certain aspects of the Mosaic law and attempted to convince people that these were crucial to their salvation. Even today it is common to find people who impose legalistic standards on others as a badge of their Christian faith. But by doing so, they often spend endless energy chasing after things that are truly nonessential.

Paul indicated that **the law is good if one uses it properly** (v. 8). The law may remind the ungodly of their sin and provide a framework for punishment of wrongdoers. If every person was free to do what was right in his or her own eyes, society would eventually

PERSONAL NOTES

crumble. The law is also, as Paul told the Galatians, a schoolmaster that is able to lead us to Christ (see Gal. 3:24 KJV). But the law can also be abused. Unfortunately, it is sometimes used as a club. But the goal of a command should be **love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith** (1 Tim. 1:5).

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. What were certain people in Ephesus attempting to teach the believers?
2. How can Christians guard themselves from being led astray by false teaching?
3. In what ways can the law be abused?

THREE: Praise the Lord for his abundant grace (1 Tim. 1:12–17).

KJV	*NIV*
12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;	**12** I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service.
13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.	**13** Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.
14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.	**14** The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.
15 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.	**15** Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.
16 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.	**16** But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE Two

1. False doctrines, myths, genealogies. Paul wrote to Titus specifically about "Jewish myths" (see Titus 1:14). These were like legendary accounts of Old Testament heroes. The genealogies were apparently false family trees for Old Testament characters. These may have been portrayed as "secret teachings" of the Old Testament. (See Robert Black, *Wesley Bible Commentary: 1&2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Wesleyan Publishing House, 2004).

2. By engaging in regular Bible study; associating with mature believers.

3. When we try to enforce obedience to a nonessential point (something ceremonial or cultural), the law becomes a club to ensure uniformity.

EXAMINE **THREE:** On a large piece paper or whiteboard, ask the class to draw a caricature of Paul before his conversion. What would he wear, carry, or say before he experienced the grace of God? Then read verses 12–17 again to see the contrast in Paul's life when he found Jesus Christ as his Savior. After studying these verses, sing a song about God's grace, such as "Amazing Grace."

1:12 *who has given me strength.* Paul acknowledged that the power to be faithful comes from God (see 2 Cor. 4:7; 12:9; Eph. 3:7; 2 Thess. 1:11).

1:13 *blasphemer.* The irony is that Paul's early life was devoted to a search-and-destroy mission against blasphemers. In his zeal, it took the Damascus road experience to show him that he, the Pharisee, was the blasphemer. What he thought was knowledge was, in fact, ignorance. He recognized, however, that his former ignorance was linked with unbelief—thus acknowledging his personal accountability. Paul was not saying that because he was ignorant his actions were not sin (see Rom. 11:30; Luke 23:34).

1:14 *grace . . . abundantly.* To imagine we are not sinful is to deny the abundance of God's grace. In the next verse, in fact, Paul identified himself as the worst of sinners (see also Eph. 2:5–8).

1:15 *I am the worst.* Paul used the present tense even though his zeal for Christ surpassed the zeal he had previous to his conversion. To begin to think of ourselves as "pretty good" is dangerous because it feeds pride and teaches us to discount the importance of God's grace in our still-imperfect lives (see 1 John 1:8–10).

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

1:16 *for that very reason.* Paul's major qualification for mercy was his extreme sinfulness because, by contrast, it put the grace of God in a clear light. This statement is more significant because it came from a man who had made being righteous the primary goal of his whole life—even before his encounter with Christ. At that point, he was forever freed from the illusion that he was intrinsically righteous (see Titus 3:5). It was, therefore, no problem with Paul that the reason behind God's mercy to him was that Christ Jesus might "display his immense patience."

1:16 *mercy . . . immense patience.* God's unconditional love, generous mercy, and immense patience are our only hope of salvation.

1:17 *Now to the King eternal.* The unusual placement of this "benediction" in the middle of a letter draws attention to the immense importance of the truths that precede it. One can almost see Paul laying his pen down to ponder over again, perhaps for hours or even days, the reality of God's grace in contrast to the impossibility of ever earning or deserving that grace.

God's Abundant Provision of Grace

KJV	*NIV*
17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.	**17** Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul was always keenly aware that he was a product of the Lord's grace. If the law had been able to save someone, it undoubtedly would have been he. As Paul once told the Philippians, he was "circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless" (Phil. 3:5–6). But in his early life, the law was a club he used to try to beat the followers of Christ into submission. His misuse of it caused him to be **a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man** (1 Tim. 1:13). And when the Lord met him on his way to Damascus, he became aware that he was not a righteous man at all, but a sinner—in fact, **the worst of sinners** (v. 16). And no matter how hard we might try to obey the law of God, all of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (see Rom. 3:23).

Fortunately, Paul discovered the remarkable truth that **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners** (1 Tim. 1:16). God is rich in mercy, not wanting to hold humanity's sins against us. As sinners we don't deserve mercy—"the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). That's what makes grace so amazing. And God is willing to pour it out on us **abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus** (1 Tim. 1:14). For that reason, he alone can receive the honor and the glory for our salvation.

Paul told Timothy that God displayed his mercy toward Paul so **Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life** (v. 16). If God could have mercy on Paul, God could forgive anybody! Paul's life was a testimony of God's love to everyone he met. Grace does that. It takes us from where we were and patiently lifts us to where God designed us to be from the very beginning. It motivates us to live our lives completely for the One who died to give us eternal life. It energizes our soul to worship him with our whole being.

PERSONAL NOTES

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. What was your life like before you experienced the grace of God?
2. What difference has God's grace made in your life?

When we truly grasp the depth of God's grace toward us, we, like Paul, will sing a wonderful doxology of praise unto him: **Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen (v. 17).**

Exercise LIFE APPLICATION

God's grace is a free gift, without any strings. But like any gift, it must be received. John wrote in his gospel, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). You can experience God's grace in your life by doing the following:

- Repent and confess your sins to God.
- Believe Christ died to save you.
- Receive God's gift by faith.

Once you take that step of faith, then you, like Paul, will become an example of God's grace to others. In the same way you have received mercy from your heavenly Father, you can in turn pass it along to others. In that way, your life will be a testimony of grace.

- Whom do you need to forgive?
- What hurts, grudges, or resentments do you need to let go of?
- To whom does God want you to extend his grace?

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE Three

1. Calls for a personal response, and should include some recognition of our sinfulness.
2. Calls for a personal response, and should include some statement of contrast between the old way of life and the new.

EXERCISE Closing

Allow your class members time to pray with thanksgiving for the life-changing power of God's grace.

Help class members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "What If?" (p. 296) from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4*.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EVALUATE Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share encouragement or words of truth they received from the study.

ENGAGE **Opening**
Recruit a panel of three class members to present brief reports on the common false teachings of Paul's day, of today, and of the intervening years in church history.

Key Verse
I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.
—1 Timothy 2:8

Scripture
1 Timothy 2:1–15

Lesson Focus
We maximize our effectiveness in service to God when we conform our lives to his standard of propriety.

Check Out . . .

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4
Unit: 4
Lesson: 2
Activity: Gotta Serve Somebody
Page: 305

Lesson 2 June 9

Maximizing Our Service to God

Engage SESSION OVERVIEW

Paul had assigned Timothy to minister at Ephesus, the capital of the province of Asia. It was a center of extreme religious diversity—countless pagan gods, mystery religions, Judaism, Christianity, and emerging cults that blended elements of all the others. Paul indicated that Timothy's primary assignment was to counter false teachers who were troubling the church (see 1 Tim. 1:3–4, 6–7, 18–20). In chapter 2, Paul began detailed instructions concerning Timothy's duties in Ephesus, and he set forth God's standard of propriety for such matters as public worship, evangelism, private devotions, proper example through holy living, and overcoming false doctrines with God's truth. All the way through, he emphasized practical ways in which each Christian may maximize his or her effectiveness in service to God.

Examine INTRODUCTION

How do we find our way through the maze of religious teachings in our day? What is true? What is false? How do we respond to those who so confidently declare "false doctrines"? How do we use God's Word to keep us on track? Paul was used by the Lord to help the Christians of the first century answer such questions. He was God's messenger to help us find the right answers for our time and circumstances.

PERSONAL NOTES

ONE: Prayer benefits everyone (1 Tim. 2:1–2).

KJV	NIV
1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; **2** For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.	**1** I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— **2** for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

From Paul's references to the false teachers, it appears that the forerunners of the Gnostics were already active in Ephesus. This was a heresy that taught that a few select persons were privy to and saved by a special *gnosis* (Greek word for "knowledge") that could only be revealed by superhuman beings or forces. Paul warned against "what is falsely called knowledge" (*gnosis*, see 1 Tim. 6:20). The Gnostics took elements of paganism, Judaism, and Christianity and mixed them all together. They dealt in "myths and endless genealogies" and "meaningless talk" (1 Tim. 1:4, 6).

In addressing the problems at Ephesus, **first of all** (2:1), Paul issued an urgent call for prayer. This was to **be made for all people,** Paul described four aspects of prayer: **petitions** dealing with personal requests that are addressed to God; **prayers**, which are general conversations with God; **intercession,** which are made on behalf of others and perhaps because of others; and **thanksgiving,** which is a reminder that gratitude must always be a part of our prayers.

Gnosticism was a religion of rebellion. Christianity was not. Prayers were to be offered **for kings and all those in authority** (v. 2; the Roman emperor and all lesser dignitaries) even though at that time they frequently persecuted Christians. Such prayers were not only for the authorities' benefit but they made possible the believers' living **peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness**. **Quiet** occurs in some form three times in this chapter (see vv. 11–12), referring here to lives that are in accord with the law, at peace with one's neighbors, and at rest from turmoil.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

ONE: Use a concordance or an online Bible program to survey all of Paul's references to prayer in his letters. Based on your discoveries, discuss how important prayer is in the Christian life. How can we make it a "first of all" priority?

2:1 *petitions* ["supplications," KJV], *prayers*, *intercession*. Fine points of difference in the three Greek words Paul chose here are hard to detect. The progression might be described as prayer requests, corporate public prayer, and earnest private intercession. The word *intercession* has legal roots, describing the role of a defense attorney on behalf of a client.

2:1 *and thanksgiving.* The most effectual prayers come from a thankful heart (see Ps. 69:30; 95:2; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2).

2:2 *for kings and all those in authority.* Paul paused in the midst of his all-inclusive statement to make sure one special group was included in the "all people" (v.1). He apparently had secular authorities in mind; in other places, the same principle was applied to leaders in the church (see Heb. 13:17). Praying for civic leaders makes sense because only as they exercise their privilege and responsibility with wisdom, according to God's principles, is it possible for people to live and worship without hindrance or fear of interruption.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE One

1. Not only are there to be "petitions" and "prayers" about our needs, but "intercession" for others, and "thanksgiving" for all of God's blessings and answers.

2. It is God's will that we pray for those in authority—no qualification is made. We pray for them however unworthy we may consider them to be.

EXAMINE TWO: Compare these verses with John 3:16–21; 2 Corinthians 5:14–20; Ephesians 1:3–14; and 2 Peter 3:8–9. Based on these passages, discuss whom God wants to be saved and who will be saved. What is the dividing line? How is prayer related to salvation?

2:3 *pleases God.* God does not delight in the failure of civic authority. Stability of government enables and enhances the spread of the gospel.

2:4 *all people.* The Greek word used here is *anthropos*, which simply means "humans."

2:4 *to be saved.* The concept of being saved in a spiritual sense is rooted in the Old Testament (see Isa. 45:22; Jer. 4:14; Ezek. 3:19; Joel 2:32). The Israelites could understand its meaning because they had so frequently been rescued or delivered from their enemies by the Lord. The New Testament church, however, was better able to grasp the concept of our more pervasive need for rescue from the tyranny of sin (see Ps. 32:1–5; Gal. 5:1; Heb. 2:15).

2:4 *all people to be saved.* Note that while God wants all people *to* be saved, this is not the same as universalism, which says that all *will* be saved. It is God's desire that all come to a saving knowledge of Jesus, but because he has given us a choice, not all will be saved. God's desire for relationship with all of us has been marred by our sinful choices.

2:4 *knowledge of the truth.* Everything we hear and are taught must be measured by the ultimate standard of truth (see John 14:6). It is for this reason that we are given the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth (see John 16:13).

2:5 *one mediator.* The function of a mediator is to bring about peace between two persons. By his life and victory over death, Jesus became the needed bridge between the holiness of God and human sinfulness (see 1 John 2:1).

2:6 *ransom.* Ransom is payment made to redeem someone from captivity or bondage by paying a demanded price. Because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, all humans are born into slavery to sin and are thus in need of being ransomed (see Gal. 4:3; Heb. 2:15).

Maximizing Our Service to God

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. In light of verse 1, what constitutes a balanced prayer life?
2. How does verse 2 help us to determine our Christian responsibility toward a ruler who may be unworthy of the office?

There is a reason we pray for leaders and live godly lives.

TWO: God wants everyone to be saved (1 Tim. 2:3–7).

KJV	NIV
3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;	**3** This is good, and pleases God our Savior,
4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.	**4** who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.
5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;	**5** For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,
6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.	**6** who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.
7 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.	**7** And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.

The indirect benefit of praying for rulers was that it helped those praying to live a more pleasant life, and to do so in a godly and holy manner. But beyond that indirect benefit is the fact that it **pleases God . . . , who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge**, not of some mystic *gnosis*, but **of the truth** (vv. 3–4). Our prayers and our lives can help bring that about.

These verses constitute one of the great statements in Scripture of the universality of God's love, of Christ's atonement, of human potential. We are to pray for **all people** (v. 1), because God **wants all people to be saved** (v. 4) and Christ **gave himself as a ransom for all people** (v. 6). While the Gnostics talked about a select few being saved, Paul opened the door of salvation to everyone. On the other hand, while the Gnostics talked about a multitude of divine

PERSONAL NOTES

beings and countless intermediaries between God and humans, Paul declared **there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus** (v. 5). Paul was all inclusive about who can be saved but absolutely exclusive about who can do the saving. This exclusiveness of Christianity and insistence that no other religion provides a means of salvation brought the world's anger down on the church in Paul's day. It still does in modern times, leading to intense persecution of Christians around the world.

In 1 Timothy 1:13–16, Paul described the kind of man he once was—"the worst of sinners." But now this God who saves had appointed him **a herald and an apostle** and **a true and faithful teacher** (2:7). He had become the Lord's agent in spreading this message to the **Gentiles**, the whole world.

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. Why do some "Christians" teach that all religions lead to God? What should our position be?
2. How did Paul's view of the inclusiveness of God's plan of salvation affect his sense of mission?
3. How did Paul's understanding of his own previous sinfulness and God's mercy affect his zeal in carrying out his mission?

Praying, living lives pleasing to God, and telling others the good news are vital parts of the Christian life. But avoiding error and extreme behavior are also essential.

THREE: God's truth protects us from error and enables us to witness effectively (1 Tim. 2:8–15).

KJV	*NIV*
8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.	**8** Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.
9 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;	**9** I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes,

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

2:6 *been witnessed to.* Continuing in the legal format, Paul characterized our advocate (Christ) as a witness on our behalf (see 1 John 2:1)—at the proper time (see Matt. 26:18).

2:7 *herald* ["preacher," KJV] . . . *apostle* . . . *teacher*. Paul did not write his own job description. He was appointed, and he wore many hats. He used the Greek word *kerux* (preacher) to describe himself only in these letters to Timothy. Peter borrowed the same word to describe Noah (see 2 Pet. 2:5).

EXPLORE Two

1. Some who consider themselves "Christians" reject the idea that there is only one way to God. This appears to them to be bigoted, intolerant, and arrogant. But we must insist on what God has told us in his Word.

2. It caused Paul to go to all peoples all over the Mediterranean world with the gospel message.

3. Since God had saved Paul, anyone could be saved; and all his time, abilities, and strength were consumed with getting that word to others.

EXAMINE **THREE:** Recruit a panel consisting of two or three class members, and ask them to listen to the presentation of the lesson commentary about women in ministry. After they've listened, let them raise questions on behalf of the entire class.

2:8 *lifting up holy hands.* The custom of lifting up hands in prayer was well established in the Old Testament (see Ps. 28:2; 63:4; 119:48; 134:2). Jeremiah called for uplifted hands, and hearts, as a sign of repentance (see Lam. 3:41–42). Paul also included the state of the heart in the practice of upraised hands in his qualifying words, "without anger or disputing."

2:9 *modestly, with decency* and *propriety*. Modest attire for both men and women does not draw undue attention to the body. Similarly, a Christian is well advised against showy or conspicuously expensive attire. Not only does such attire draw attention to the individual, it is often an indication of faulty stewardship.

2:9 *modestly.* This word in Greek means to be bashful. When referring to attitude toward God, it means reverent. Thus a woman is to be dressed bashfully toward others and reverently before God. This definition should answer all questions of what is allowed and what is not.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

2:10 *with good deeds.* A Christian woman's character and godly life should be her most outstanding feature. This does not imply, however, that carelessness or neglect of appearance is a sign of "spirituality." Rather, it is a matter of priorities. Like Paul, Peter wisely admonished women to pay more attention to developing inward beauty than to outward adornment (see 1 Pet. 3:3–4; Ps. 45:13; Matt. 6:28–30).

2:11 *quietness and full submission.* Any discussion of submission must include two other observations Paul made. He told the Galatians, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28). Out of this oneness in Christ should come an attitude of mutual submission as Paul taught in Ephesians 5:21, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Having said that, this passage says nothing about women submitting to men, but rather submitting to their teachers: they were to "learn in quietness and full submission." Apparently, some women in Ephesus may have presumed to have more knowledge than their teachers. Any disciple, whether male or female, should submit to their God-ordained teachers.

2:12 *assume authority* ["usurp authority," KJV]. This obviously is not to be taken as a universal principle. Paul commended Priscilla for her role with her husband Aquila in instructing Apollos in "the way of God" (Acts 18:26). Some women in Ephesus who followed false teachers were apparently challenging (perhaps usurping) the authority of Timothy and other legitimate leaders.

2:14 *the woman . . . was deceived.* This does not assign the full responsibility for all the sin of the world to Eve (as Adam tried so manfully to do). It is an indication that women, by their feminine nature, are susceptible to temptation in a unique way.

KJV	NIV
10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.	**10** but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.
11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.	**11** A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.
12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.	**12** I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.
13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve.	**13** For Adam was formed first, then Eve.
14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.	**14** And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.
15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.	**15** But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

Here Paul was concerned in using God's truth against the errors of the false teachers and in calling men and women to conduct themselves in such a way that their lives would witness effectively.

Paul renewed his call for prayer, specifically calling the **men** to pray, prayer rising out of lives marked by **holy hands** and the absence of **anger** and **disputing** (v. 8). Paul characterized the false teachers as engaging in "controversies and quarrels about words," "strife," and "constant friction" (1 Tim. 6:3–5). The men were to reject such examples and live holy lives that would empower prayer.

In the pagan worship of Ephesus, women sometimes worshiped in the nude or lifted their skirts to their waists. Paul called instead for Christian **women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety** (2:9). And the emphasis was not to be on that which was showy or extravagant, but on **good deeds**, apparel that is **appropriate for women who profess to worship God** (v. 10).

Verses 11–15 have been interpreted as excluding women from ordination and the ministry, from leadership of men or teaching men. But one of the rules of biblical interpretation is to read Scripture in light of its written context—the surrounding verses, the book containing it, and in light of what the Bible as a whole has to say on the topic.

PERSONAL NOTES

To read verses 11–15 as excluding women from ordination and the ministry is inconsistent with the whole of Scripture. Paul declared that in Christ there is neither "male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). In the Old Testament, God used Miriam as a prophetess (see Ex. 15:20) and a leader (see Mic. 6:4). He used Deborah as a prophetess and as one of the judges who led Israel (see Judg. 4:4). He used the prophetess Huldah to bring great revival under King Josiah (see 2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chron. 34:22). In the New Testament, Peter declared that Joel's prophecy that God would pour out his Spirit on daughters and women and they would prophesy began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (see Joel 2:28–32; Acts 2:16–21). Paul spoke of women praying and prophesying in public worship (see 1 Cor. 11:5). The word order in the original makes it clear that Priscilla took the lead when she and her husband instructed the famous preacher Apollos (see Acts 18:26). So what does 1 Timothy 2:11–15 really mean?

The pagan worship at Ephesus gave prominence to goddesses such as Diana or Artemis (see Acts 19:23–27). And other pagan religions also gave prominence to females, both divine and human. They taught "false doctrines" (see 1 Tim. 1:3), such as that women were to totally dominate men and that Eve existed before Adam and was the author or originator of Adam. These false teachers had especially influenced the women in Ephesus (see 1 Tim. 5:13, 15; 2 Tim. 3:6–7).

Paul said the women were to **learn in quietness and full submission** (1 Tim. 2:11). **Quietness** here carries much the same meaning as in 1 Timothy 2:2, where we are instructed to live "quiet lives." In this sense, women were to quietly study God's Word and the doctrines of the true teachers and were to submit fully to his truth, not error.

Verse 12 is the crux of this passage. The key word is the verb *authentein*, translated **to assume authority over**. The Greek word occurs only here in the New Testament. It has various meanings. In light of the false teachings in Ephesus, the verse can be translated, "I do not permit a woman to teach that she has absolute domination over a man," or "I do not permit a woman to claim that she is the author (originator) of man." The latter is especially appropriate, as Paul went on to refer to Genesis and say **Adam was formed first, then Eve** (v. 13). Not only is a woman not to teach false doctrine or make false claims, but she is to be "quiet" (same word as in verses 2 and 11). "Quiet" here can mean the same thing as in the other verses—a life free of the dissension

PERSONAL NOTES

EXPLORE Three

1. Religiously, we have a similar maze of religions and religious teachings of all varieties: pagan, animistic, New Age, secular, atheistic, agnostic, various world religions, as well as Christianity. And many people are eclectic—picking what they want from each and blending them together.

2. Paul answered error with truth. He advised the Ephesians not to get caught up in speculations and religious ideas of dubious origin. He called for study and submission to God's Word and God's messengers. This is good advice for us too.

EXERCISE Closing

Ask one of your class members to print out a list of local, state, and national leaders to distribute to the class. Challenge each person in your class to pray for these leaders.

Help class members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Political Landscape" (p. 305) from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4*.

that comes from quarreling about false doctrines. Paul rounded out his statement by pointing out that Eve was the one who first reached for the forbidden fruit, and therefore women cannot claim to be spiritually superior to men by nature.

Verse 15 cannot mean that women are saved *by* childbearing. Otherwise childless women, whether single or married, could not be saved. Salvation comes only through Christ, not through what we do. Some have taught this verse means "women will get safely through childbirth," as Moffatt translated the verse. Others taught that Paul was elevating marriage and motherhood, unlike some false teachers who denigrated those roles. Still others have taught that we are all saved through the birth of *the* Child, the Messiah. Whatever it means, we can be sure salvation comes about by **faith** in Christ and **love and holiness with propriety**. This latter word also occurred in verse 9, and can mean "self-control," "decency," or "chastity."

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. How would you compare Ephesus religiously with our present day?
2. How can Paul's counsel to the men and women of Ephesus help us deal with our present religious culture?

Exercise LIFE APPLICATION

Review your pattern of daily and family prayer. Do you take time to pray for government officials? National leaders? State leaders? Local leaders? Plan to pray for them regularly, even if you do not agree with them. The Lord has admonished us to do so.

Join with the Lord in wanting all people to be saved. Befriend someone you know who is not a Christian—someone for whom you can pray, before whom you can live, and to whom you can tell the story of what Jesus has done for you.

We need help avoiding error. We need to pray for the Lord's help. We need to be in the Word. We need to seek the assistance of our pastor and mature, godly people. They can help us know what entertainment, print media, and online sources to avoid. If you read something that conflicts with what you have been taught, don't swallow it. Check it out in the Scriptures with someone who knows the Word.

PERSONAL NOTES

Key Verse
Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be . . . self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

—Titus 1:7–8

Scripture
1 Timothy 3:1–13;
Titus 1:5–9

Lesson Focus
Spiritual leadership requires living with honor, integrity, and grace.

Check Out . . .

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4
Unit: 4
Lesson: 3
Activity: Measuring Up
Page: 310

Lesson 3 June 16

Qualifications for Spiritual Leadership

Engage | Session Overview

Timothy and Titus received instruction from Paul that included specific qualifications for those who were in leadership or desired to be in leadership in the church. Paul managed to cover a lot of territory in relatively few words. He was definite, to the point, and made no apology for setting high standards for those who desired leadership roles in the church. Paul felt very strongly about how Christians should live, both for their own good and for their testimony to the world.

Examine | Introduction

Paul made it clear that spiritual leaders needed certain spiritual qualifications to lead church people and to lead others to Christ. Perhaps he first made a list of qualities Christians should have and then out of that list chose qualities he felt were absolutely necessary for those who were going lead the church. There is a natural tendency to see a qualifications list from a negative view and focus on all the people who are disqualified. A qualifications list does disqualify certain people, but it also assists in finding, encouraging, building, and equipping the qualified and the "potentially qualified." Paul was not really qualifying or disqualifying people; he was saying that people qualify or disqualify themselves. Every Christian should want to be a spiritual

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EVALUATE Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share encouragement or words of truth they received from the study.

ENGAGE **Opening**
Put together a ten-question true-or-false quiz based on today's study Scriptures. Allow your class members to self-grade their answers as you work through the lesson.

EXAMINE **Background**
Titus was evidently the first Gentile to become a member of Paul's evangelistic team. He first appeared in conjunction with the Jerusalem conference, where the main issue was whether Gentile converts should be required to conform to Jewish customs (see Acts 11; Gal. 2:1–5). Following this assignment he went to Crete (see Titus 1:5), where he visited various churches as Paul's emissary, clearing up doctrinal difficulties and helping the churches to set up an orderly system of government.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXAMINE ONE: Have one class member read this passage aloud, while the rest of the class writes observations to discuss later about who, what, when, where, how, and why. Be prepared to lead a brief study of two or three of the words used to describe the qualifications listed in these verses.

3:1 *trustworthy saying.* Paul used this phrase frequently by means of emphasis (see 1 Tim. 1:15, 3:1, 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8). It is also used in Revelation (21:5; 22:6).

3:1 *aspires to be.* Paul did not suggest that being goal oriented is wrong.

3:1 *overseer . . . noble task.* The Greek word *episkope* and the closely related word *episkopos* are most often translated "bishop" or "overseer." The term was often used to designate church leaders (see Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 2:25). Because being a church leader implied so much influence, the requirements had to be strict—as they were for the Levitical priesthood.

3:2 *above reproach* ["blameless," KJV]. Matthew Henry stated, "A minister must give as little occasion for blame as can be, lest he bring reproach upon his office." A person who is qualified to be a church leader must not have any secrets that might embarrass or bring his or her integrity into question (see Gen. 6:9; 17:1; Job 1:1; Eph. 1:4). Paul mentioned several specific traits that are the mark of a blameless man—self-control, gentleness, and lack of greed (see v. 3). Paul gave a reason why the overseer needs to be scrupulous in his or her lifestyle in Titus 1:9.

3:2 *faithful to his wife.* Paul used similar language in writing to Titus (1:6) and in giving instructions about deacons (see 1 Tim. 3:12) and widows — "faithful to her husband" (1 Tim. 5:7). Dr. Bob Black cites Robert Anderson, who puts it more colloquially, declaring an overseer must be "a one-woman kind of man."

3:2 *hospitable.* The idea of hospitality seems like an option to us. For them, it was a necessity. Inns were few and far between for travelers. The Bible is full of injunctions to be hospitable to aliens and strangers who otherwise might perish due to weather or wild animals.

3:6 *recent convert.* Much damage has been inflicted on the cause of Christ and on young Christians by giving too much responsibility too soon. God is not in a hurry to push his servants into the limelight. He waited eighty years before giving Moses his marching orders (see Ex. 7:7).

leader—an example of right living and a beacon of steadfast hope. With that desire should come conviction and yearning to be the best salt and light we can be.

ONE: Spiritual leadership requires living with honor (1 Tim. 3:1–7).

KJV	*NIV*
1 This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. **2** A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; **3** Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; **4** One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; **5** (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) **6** Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. **7** Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.	**1** Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. **2** Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, **3** not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. **4** He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. **5** (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) **6** He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. **7** He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

Paul said spiritual leadership is a **noble task** (v. 1). An honorable task is best accomplished by honorable people. The office of **overseer**, pastor, bishop, elder, parson—you choose the word—spoken of in this section of the study is an office that includes preaching, teaching the Word of God, watching over the flock of God, doing the ministry of the church.

In the New Testament church, the structure was simple. There were only two offices—elders (overseers of the congregation) and deacons (caretakers of the business and benevolence). That is not

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an all-inclusive description, but it gets to the heart of the matter. The elders and the deacons led the work of God in a local church.

Every Christian has the means through God's indwelling Spirit to live a holy life. Every Christian is empowered by God's Spirit to live an exemplary life that points people to God. Spiritual leaders are not to be the "blind leading the blind" or the "blind leading the sighted." Spiritual leaders are to take the lead in living right so that others may follow.

To live **above reproach** (v. 2) is to live in such a way that charges of false teaching, immorality, and the like would not have any evidence at all—or any self-supplied ammunition to encourage suspicion. The minister can't teach marital faithfulness unless he is **faithful to his wife**—or husband in a woman leader's case. Paul's emphasis on being **temperate** and **self-controlled** shows how important it is for spiritual leaders to be in control of their thoughts, passions, and actions. The spiritual leader should behave in a **respectable** manner. Being **hospitable** means knowing how to roll out the welcome mat and the red carpet and give to everyone possible the assurance of your love and care and God's love and care.

The man or woman of God is filled with his Spirit, **not given to drunkenness** (v. 3). Men and woman who lead the church must be peaceable and gentle, **not violent**. They are not to live grasping to win a quarrel or a fortune.

In the next few verses, Paul brought it home. He said a spiritual leader must **manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect** (v. 4). One of the most important lessons for leaders to learn is that to manage well, you have to care a great deal. Another vital lesson for leaders to learn is that real respect is always earned and won, never arbitrated or forced. A church leader who neglects his or her family in any way is putting both the family and church in danger. This means fulfilling one's role in love, discipline, training, time, attention, work, and play. If leaders can do that with their families, they can more likely do it with their flock.

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TEACHER STUDY NOTES

3:7 *good reputation.* While reputation is not always a good measure of character, a bad report can have devastating effects on the ministry of a leader. Some people feel that it is not fair to put pastors on a pedestal, but the need to be super careful is part of the job description. Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matt. 5:14). Whether this principle applies in a special way only to pastors is open for debate, but it definitely does apply to pastors. Daniel is proof that it is possible to live above reproach (see Dan. 6:5; Titus 1:7).

3:7 *the devil's trap.* The devil is the only one who benefits when a Christian's reputation becomes blotted.

EXPLORE One

1. A spiritual leader needs to be established in faith. For a recent convert, one's new life in Christ might become more about new tasks rather than new relationships. The task of leadership is not about feeling important. The apostle Paul said that conceit could bring the immature down as it happened with Satan.

2. Leaders need to be believable. Inconsistency hinders the work of God. The leader may need to make things right in his or her family or community. All the preaching and praying in the world is of no value if people are not listening.

EXAMINE TWO: Contrast and compare the way leaders are chosen in your congregation with the qualifications Paul listed for Timothy. Use a chart with two columns labeled "That Was Then" and "This Is Now." Would Paul want to congratulate your church? Would he want to correct something in the process?

3:8 *worthy of respect.* Honor is tied to office or position. Respect is more personal; it must be earned (see v. 13). Note that the same is true of women (see v. 11).

3:9 *the deep truths of the faith.* Only serious class members of the Bible need apply here (see Prov. 2:1–5; Rom. 11:33). A leader who has a sketchy awareness of its contents will at best be embarrassed by perceptive questions (see 1 Pet. 3:15); at worst such a leader will lead his followers astray (see Luke 6:39).

3:10 *first be tested.* By implication ("if there is nothing against them"), the most rigorous testing for positions of leadership in the church must deal with character and reputation, not just theoretical knowledge. All the head knowledge in the world cannot compensate for weakness of character or inconsistency of life (see Heb. 6:6).

3:11 *not malicious talkers.* Men and women alike need to examine the motives behind what they choose to talk about and how much detail is necessary. Because women are more oriented to relationships and personalities than men, however, this area is one in which they have to take particular care. Malicious talk can even be disguised as prayer requests.

3:13 *gain an excellent standing and great assurance.* Paul had addressed the desirability of leadership positions (v. 1), the personal character traits required (vv. 2–3, 8–9; Titus 1:7), and the manner of life that godly leadership demands (vv. 4–7, 8; Titus 1:6–8). He concluded this statement by explaining the rewards that come from faithfulness within this special calling. Note that the rewards are not necessarily material, but are an inward wholeness and increased measure of spiritual surety (see Phil. 3:13–14).

Qualifications for Spiritual Leadership

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. Why can't a "recent convert" (v. 6) assume spiritual leadership?
2. Why is a "good reputation with outsiders" (v. 7) so important?

Taking the high road, caring about God's reputation as reflected in your life, showing to others the love, compassion, stability, integrity, and holiness of God is vital to helping others realize that they too are called to holiness.

TWO: Spiritual leadership requires living with integrity (1 Tim. 3:8–13).

KJV	NIV
8 Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;	**8** In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.
9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.	**9** They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.
10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.	**10** They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.
11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.	**11** In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.
12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.	**12** A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well.
13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.	**13** Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

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In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect (v. 8). "All right, church leaders of every board, committee, ministry team, and auxiliary of the church," Paul said: "The same goes for you." As Christians we continue to grow in the Lord, but there comes a time when we must be ready, willing, and excited about participating in spiritual leadership in the life of our churches.

In this list, Paul both repeated certain items and added others. The added qualifications are relevant to the benevolent responsibilities of the deacons. Leaders in the church must be **sincere** (v. 8)—mean what you say and say what you mean. Be believable. **Dishonest gain** is motivated by greed and is as wrong for a good cause as it is for a bad cause. Dishonesty is a sin at home and a sin at church.

The need to **keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience** (v. 9) is great. It matters what the preacher believes. It matters what the church leaders believe. It matters what we believe. Effective leadership is not just about taking care of all the church stuff. If you do not believe the Bible, if you do not believe the gospel, if you do not hold to sound doctrine, you fail the test and you cannot lead.

Just as Paul had high expectations of the overseers and deacons, he indicated the **women** (v. 11) in support ministries must also meet a high standard of character. If they are **temperate and trustworthy**, they are likely to be **worthy of respect**. The Greek word for **temperate** comes from the root that indicates vigilance and alertness, as well as being free from intoxicants. To be **trustworthy** is to hold fast to the faith and to be a person on whom others can rely.

When Paul admonished the women not to be **malicious talkers**, he used the Greek word that is translated "devil" thirty-five out of thirty-eight times it occurs in the New Testament. Dr. Ralph Earle commented, "This suggests the idea that those who indulge in gossip or slander are doing the devil's business!" However, women who embrace the positive qualities of this verse and avoid malicious talking will certainly be found **worthy of respect**.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE Two

1. The apostle Paul said to be sure there was nothing against them. Tests of honor, integrity, virtue, etc.

2. No. Some people are specifically called. But all believers should want to lead people to Christ.

3. Pray. Be faithful in attendance. Serve. Tithe. Many other possible responses.

EXAMINE **THREE:** Research to discover how the New Testament church ensured that its leaders knew and taught sound doctrine. Discuss the measures we take today to accomplish the same goal.

1:5 *put in order what was left unfinished.* It appears that Paul and Titus had jointly preached on the island of Crete, but Paul felt he needed to move on before churches had been firmly established. Here Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders (see 1:6–9 for the qualifications of these persons) who could give leadership and stability to local groups of Christians.

1:6 *blameless.* Of course no one then or now achieves absolute perfection in performance. But Paul here emphasized that church leaders must, through God's grace, move toward Jesus' goals of loving God and neighbor well. People qualified for leadership are those who are open to the transforming work of God's Spirit. Why? So leaders do not discredit the message they proclaim by not living that message themselves (see 2:5, 8). So that leaders can lovingly confront followers who are falling short of what God wants to be and do in their lives.

1:6 *faithful to his wife.* This and the next phrase speak of the leader's interaction with his family. No person can control all the choices others make, even close family members. But all people are responsible for the influence they have upon those near to them. If a person cannot relate well with those in his home, how can that person be expected to lead a church well?

1:6 *wild and disobedient.* The Greek word for *wild* is the same one used to describe the prodigal son, who "squandered his wealth in wild living" (Luke 15:13). Paul knew that the reckless behavior of a elder's child could cast aspersions on the church.

1:7 *not overbearing.* The traits Paul described in 1:7–8 underscore two primary qualifications for leadership. The good leader is a person who is stable, not given to rash decisions, and not under the control of fleeting emotions. This leader is also one who is more concerned for the welfare of others than his own.

1:9 *the trustworthy message.* Church leaders practice God's ways (see vv. 6–8). Likewise, they believe and speak God's truth. By their lives, they encourage those who walk the right path, as well as reach out to those who have chosen other routes.

Qualifications for Spiritual Leadership

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. What kind of test should be given to a person who wants to become a deacon (spiritual leader)?
2. Should every Christian want to be a leader?
3. What things can and should every Christian do for God and the church?

Your level of spiritual leadership is not about appointments or elections; it is about living for God with honor, integrity, and grace.

THREE: Spiritual leadership requires living with grace (Titus 1:5–9).

KJV	NIV
5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: **6** If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. **7** For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; **8** But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; **9** Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.	**5** The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. **6** An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. **7** Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. **8** Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. **9** He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

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Once again much of the list is the same, but the additions are valuable instruction from the heart of God and the pen of Paul.

Being **overbearing** (v. 7), arrogant, and unyielding is a real hindrance to the gospel. A **quick-tempered** person puts so much at risk. With self-control and God-control, the temper can be tamed. Look at the contrast between an unyielding hot-tempered person and a person who is **upright, holy and disciplined** (v. 8). Who would you choose to be a spiritual leader in your church?

Holding **firmly to the trustworthy message** (v. 9) is important as offense and defense. A spiritual leader can accomplish good and defeat evil with sound doctrine.

Explore Understanding God's Word

1. Why is Paul's insistence on a leader's being self-controlled so important?
2. What does it mean to be disciplined?

Coming on strong is not as effective as coming on right. God, who has all power, is not overbearing, arrogant, or quick-tempered. Spiritual leadership requires living with grace.

Exercise Life Application

Spiritual leadership has requirements and rewards. Our mission is all about people. The requirements are all about being able to do what needs to be done for the sake of people. The greatest reward is seeing people come to God and the great joy we find in being the people of God. Our personal relationships with God and with others, Christians and non-Christians, should instill within us a strong desire to live exemplary lives.

All Christians are called to lead others to Christ. Take a moment to carefully and prayerfully list the areas of your life that perhaps need to be refined by God. Bring them to him; in doing so, you are becoming better prepared to lead others to Christ. Use Paul's lists to bring your needs into focus.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE **Three**

1. Those who lack self-control will be out of God's will. There are many possible responses, but we must take ourselves in hand, and surrender ourselves to God to be controlled by his Spirit.

2. Use a dictionary for responses. Being disciplined means doing what is right, not just what feels good or is convenient. Being under control—God's control or self-control.

EXERCISE **Closing**

Help your class members summarize what they have learned today by giving each one an opportunity to complete this statement: "I used to think . . . but now I think . . . ." Their answers to the opening quiz may be helpful at this point.

Help class members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Qualifications Slips" (p. 310) from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4*.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EVALUATE Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share encouragement or words of truth they received from the study.

ENGAGE **Opening**
Let a few of your creative class members put together a skit that acts out Jesus' statement about removing the plank from your own eye before looking for dust in another's eye (see Matt. 7:3–5).

Key Verse
Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

—1 Timothy 4:16

Scripture
1 Timothy 4:1–16

Lesson Focus
Living a balanced life is key to being a faithful disciple.

Check Out . . .

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Lesson 4 June 23

Five Steps toward Faithful Discipleship

Engage Session Overview

One of life's greatest temptations is to be so distracted by others that we fail to notice our own shortcomings. Paul addressed this problem in 1 Timothy, where he called Timothy to give attention to his own life, conduct, and beliefs. While Timothy was a full-time clergyman, Paul's concerns apply to the life of every Christian. Each of us has a circle of influence. Each of us is called to minister God's grace to others, and each of us must answer to God for our own spiritual development.

Examine Introduction

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke of a man with a plank in his eye who tried to remove a speck of dust from another's eye (see Matt. 7:3–5). This illustration is played out all too often when Christians are quick to point out the sins and shortcomings of others and slow to notice their own.

In 1 Timothy 4, Paul told us how to avoid that error. There we find five steps toward faithful discipleship.

PERSONAL NOTES

Five Steps toward Faithful Discipleship

ONE: A faithful disciple warns and encourages others (1 Tim. 4:1–5).

KJV	NIV
1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;	**1** The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.
2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;	**2** Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.
3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.	**3** They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth.
4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:	**4** For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,
5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.	**5** because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

Verse 4 states a principle and an attitude. The principle is **everything God created is good**. The attitude is that we are to receive God's good creations **with thanksgiving . . . consecrated by the word of God and prayer**.

This is Paul's theological basis for warning Timothy about certain false teachers who **forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods** (v. 3). These teachers had abandoned **the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons** (v. 1). Further, they were **hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron** (v. 2).

Notice that Paul warned Timothy about false teachers and then told him to warn others (v. 6). This is one of the behaviors of a faithful disciple. A godly disciple warns and encourages other believers.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXAMINE **ONE:** Brainstorm together and develop a list of ways we can discern false teachings from the truth.

4:1 *some will abandon the faith.* Paul had been warned in his spirit that many who readily receive the gospel will not remain faithful to their first flush of belief. Jesus gave the same warning (see Matt. 24:24). He used the picture of a farmer sowing seeds on different kinds of soil to explain why such things happen (see Matt. 13:3–9).

4:1 *deceiving spirits . . . taught by demons.* False doctrine is concocted in the devil's workshop (see Eph. 6:12; 1 John 4:1).

4:2 *hypocritical liars.* Both words are based in deceit—another example of doubling up words for emphasis. The Greek word translated *hypocritical* refers to a way of life, or actions; the word translated *liars* indicates spoken words. The composite picture is of people who act "religious" but speak lies (see Matt. 7:5, 23:28; Mark 12:15; Luke 6:42, 12:1, 13:15; Gal. 2:13; James 5:12). Among other things, Jesus referred to such hypocritical liars as wolves in sheep's clothing (see Matt. 7:15, 10:16; Luke 10:13; Acts 20:29).

4:2 *consciences have been seared.* Burning with a hot iron, fire, or a caustic chemical creates scar tissue—a tougher tissue than that around the scar. Used medically, cauterization can have beneficial effects by stopping or preventing hemorrhage or infection. Scarring on the conscience, however, hardens it toward sin (see 2 Chron. 36:13; Dan. 5:20; Ezek. 3:7; Mark 6:52; Heb. 3:13).

4:3 *forbid . . . order.* One of the identifying marks of cults is the oppressive control the leaders exert over their followers (see Luke 11:46). While some church discipline is necessary and beneficial to true doctrine, believers need the help of the Holy Spirit and the principles of sound doctrine set forth in the Bible by which to test what they are taught (see Rom. 12:2; Col. 4:12; 1 Pet. 4:17).

4:3 *with thanksgiving.* Christians hold their citizenship in heaven, but God knows we need some not-so-eternal things in order to live on earth. He is the source of our material blessings, so he is able to provide them to us. We need to recognize and use what he gives us with thanksgiving (see notes for 4:5 below).

4:4 *nothing is to be rejected.* Paul had already delineated what is included in this reference to "nothing": specifically, marriage and certain foods. In our day, we have many examples of the tendency of cults to be marked by dietary laws and perversions of the God-given pattern of marriage (see Acts 11:7–10; Titus 1:15; 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23).

4:5 *consecrated.* The attitude of thankfulness is, in a very real sense, an act of consecration that literally blesses God's provisions to our use (see Deut. 15:10; Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess. 5:18; see also the notes on 1 Tim. 6:17).

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE One

1. The best way to equip yourself to identify error is to have a thorough knowledge of the truth. Regular Bible study and prayer, coupled with faithful attendance at a Bible-teaching church will equip you.
2. Calls for a personal response.
3. Calls for a personal response.

EXAMINE TWO: Present an overview of some less frequently used spiritual disciplines such as meditation, fasting, and submitting to a spiritual director. Answer the basic questions of who, what, when, where, why, and how for each one. Encourage your class members to broaden their training in godliness by trying a new spiritual discipline for a month.

4:6 *point these things out.* The phrase suggests gentleness in teaching (see 1 Tim. 3:3; Prov. 16:21). Truth seekers do not need to be bludgeoned into truth. As one writer put it, "You don't always have to chop with the sword of truth. You can point with it, too" (Anne Lamott, *Bird By Bird*).

4:7 *godless myths* and *old wives' tales* (see notes on 1 Tim. 1:4; 2 Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:14—Jewish myths).

4:7 *train yourself.* While it is not possible to live a godly life without the power of the Holy Spirit, neither can we do it by being passive. It takes commitment on our part to release the power that makes holy living possible. The fruits of the Spirit are given freely—to those who diligently seek them (see Gal. 5:22; John 15:7; 1 Tim. 1:5; Rom. 12:12; 1 Pet. 3:11; Col. 3:12; 1 Pet. 1:13; 3:4).

4:8 *physical training.* The Olympic Games and other major sporting events had already flourished for centuries when Paul wrote these words. (The first recorded Olympic Games occurred in 776 BC, although similar festivals in honor of various gods probably were held before 1700 BC.) Only a comparatively few people are willing and able to go through the rigorous and costly training required for that level of competition. The Christian, however, should be no less rigorous in spiritual training (see 1 Cor. 9:25; Heb. 12:1–3)!

4:10 *That is why we labor and strive.* Paul frequently reminded himself and his hearers of the central focus of a Christian's life—the gospel. Its essence is that God has provided a way for us to be saved from sin (see John 3:16; Matt. 1:21; Mark 16:16).

Five Steps toward Faithful Discipleship

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. What is the best way to identify erroneous teachings?
2. Has another Christian ever given you a warning that you felt was prompted by God? Describe it.
3. Are you open to letting God speak a word of warning through you to a fellow believer?

TWO: A faithful disciple is involved in a continuing program of spiritual development (1 Tim. 4:6–10).

KJV	NIV
6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.	**6** If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.
7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.	**7** Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.
8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.	**8** For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.
9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.	**9** This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.
10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.	**10** That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.

The heart of verses 6–10 is **train yourself to be godly** (v. 7). This is the divine alternative to being swept away by "deceiving spirits" (v. 1), or **godless myths and old wives' tales** (v. 7). We do not accomplish godly training in sixty minutes on Sunday morning any more than an athlete stays in shape with a weekly one-hour workout. Training in godliness requires regular, systematic, faith-stretching effort.

PERSONAL NOTES

Five Steps toward Faithful Discipleship

Dr. Oliver G. Wilson wrote in his book *Boundless Horizons*, "No man can give to God as much as God will give back to him. We do not possess enough to equal or match His unbounded generosity. No habits or tastes or talents are ever impoverished by being unreservedly offered to God. When 'Christ first' becomes the controlling motive of the life, the soul moves in its true orbit and eternity alone will reveal the full unfolding of such a life" (p. 83).

A lifetime plan of spiritual development includes adopting a "Christ first" motive. "Christ first" living will crowd out many interesting pastimes and habits that we think are essential. Yet, when one looks back on such a life there are no regrets. Paul expressed "Christ first" by saying **we have put our hope in the living God** (v. 10).

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. What might be included in a lifelong program of training in godliness? (See 1 Cor. 9:24–27; Heb. 12:1.)
2. How do you distinguish between genuine training in godliness and mere legalism?
3. What does your weekly schedule say about the source of your hope?

THREE: The faithful disciple lives an exemplary life (1 Tim. 4:11–12).

KJV	*NIV*
11 These things command and teach. **12** Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.	**11** Command and teach these things. **12** Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

Younger believers sometimes make **Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young** into "fightin' words." However, a gentler emphasis emerges by starting with the second half of the verse, as in this paraphrase: "Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity, and they will not look down on you because you are young."

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE Two

1. Training in godliness should include church attendance, Christian fellowship, Bible study, Communion, and prayer (see Acts 2:42), and others.

2. Healthy Christian disciplines can become legalistic when we trust in the performance of them to save us. The believer needs to ask, "What is the biblical basis for these disciplines?"

3. Personal responses should include an evaluation of one's time and attention in the course of a week.

EXAMINE **THREE:** Use a chart listing the five areas where we are to set an example for each other in one column and the fruit of the Spirit (see Gal. 5:22–23) in the second column. Discuss how the fruit of the Spirit is expressed or shown in each of the five areas.

4:11 *Command and teach.* Paul gave the following instructions directly to Timothy. Because he was young, Timothy apparently was hesitant at times about being assertive in his teaching and administration. Here Paul blended encouragement with instruction: Teach what you know to be the truth (v. 6), he exhorted. He interspersed reminders of the investment that people had made in Timothy by training him in his early years and by the laying on of hands by the elders (see 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 1:5–6). Here he encouraged Timothy to not let anyone intimidate him when he was teaching the truth with authority and assurance.

4:12 *Don't let.* While Timothy could carry out his calling without apology for his youth, Paul reminded him of his responsibility to live in a blameless manner. Paul had already made it clear that positions of leadership in the church are accompanied by the responsibility to be role models.

EXPLORE Three

1. Possible responses include: *Speech*—refraining from gossip, refraining from off-color or suggestive humor, always speaking the best of others. *Life*—living a simple lifestyle. *Love*—being a person of compassion. *Faith*—refusing to yield to one's fears and instead trusting God to meet challenges head on. *Purity*—living a "Ten Commandments" lifestyle.
2. Calls for a personal response.
3. Calls for a personal response.

EXAMINE **FOUR:** Guide your class through a direct study of 1 Corinthians 12:1–11 to discover the purpose and the source of spiritual gifts. Discuss the reasons for using our spiritual gifts faithfully.

4:13 *Until I come.* Bible scholars have difficulty placing the time of this writing in the chronology of events in Paul's life as recounted in Acts. It is supposed that Paul was released from house arrest (see Acts 28) and then arrested again. In any case, this comment (coupled with the manner of the greeting in 1 Tim. 1:1) makes it clear that he either was not in prison at the time of this writing, or was hoping for a release.

4:13 *devote yourself.* With the instincts of a good teacher, Paul clarified a plan of action in order for Timothy to set priorities in use of his time and energy. The public reading of Scripture is of primary importance in church services—one that is often neglected. John Wesley emphasized the importance of public reading of the Scriptures, making that a significant part of corporate worship.

4:14 *Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy.* Many considerations can cause a person to lay aside the ministry he or she has been called to, and for which he or she has been anointed by the church (see Rom. 11:29). Paul's admonitions to Timothy suggest that the younger man may have been unassertive and reserved in personality. At times he might well have been tempted to bolt and run rather than stand up to pressure.

Five Steps toward Faithful Discipleship

Rather than demanding respect, we would be more effective if we were quiet and let our **speech**, **life**, **love**, **faith**, and **purity** speak for us (v. 12). These five areas are meant to be all inclusive. All of the believer's life should honor God. This is holiness. One test to apply to our habits and practices is to ask ourselves, "How would I feel if this were on the front page of tomorrow's newspaper?" Living a godly life is impossible apart from the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. Give one example of how a believer can set an example by speech, life, love, faith, or purity.
2. In which of these five areas are you doing the best?
3. In which do you need to make improvements?

FOUR: The faithful disciple faithfully exercises God's gifts (1 Tim. 4:13–14).

KJV	*NIV*
13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. **14** Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.	**13** Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. **14** Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

Every believer has at least one spiritual gift (see 1 Cor. 12:7). Some believers do not realize this. Others **neglect** (see 1 Tim. 4:14) their gifts when secondary interests sidetrack them. The believer must consciously choose to stay focused on his or her primary calling.

From time to time it is good to take inventory of our spiritual gifts and how we are using them. There is no more appropriate time than today for you to conduct an evaluation of your gifts and how you use them.

PERSONAL NOTES

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. What are other possible reasons believers neglect their spiritual gifts?
2. What can a church, Sunday school class, or Bible study group do to encourage the faithful exercise of spiritual gifts?

FIVE: The faithful disciple scrutinizes his own life carefully (1 Tim. 4:15–16).

KJV	NIV
15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. **16** Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.	**15** Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. **16** Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Paul urged the believer to evaluate his or her own **life and doctrine** (v. 16). According to the Scriptures, it is possible to be "in church" all one's life and yet be "out of the faith" (see 1 Cor. 10:12).

I have made the following unsettling observation. My son is strong, young, and, in my opinion, quite handsome. When I'm with him, it is easy for me to think that we look alike. But, standing next to him in front of a full-length mirror reveals all. Suddenly the twenty-seven-year age difference is obvious. I'm shorter, heavier, and my hair's much thinner. It is a deflating moment!

Is it possible for us to assume we are spiritual because we look only at the faithful believers around us? Perhaps that is why Paul urged us to step up to the "gospel mirror" and take a look at the truth (see James 1:23–25).

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE Four

1. Some reasons that believers neglect their spiritual gifts include fear, shyness, and lack of opportunity.

2. A couple of ways to encourage gift use is "spiritual gifts" testing and enlisting believers in ministries that give them the opportunity to use their gifts.

EXAMINE **FIVE:** Use a concordance to conduct a word study of *perseverance* in the New Testament.

4:15 *be diligent*; *progress*. The Christian life should be a life of growth and change (see Eph. 4:13; Phil. 1:9; 3:12; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18).

4:16 *save both yourself and your hearers*. Obedient and wholehearted service to others in the name of Christ is, in turn, satisfying and fulfilling. Our spirits, as well as our bodies, are designed for action (see Matt. 10:42; Luke 7:48; 2 Cor. 1:3–4).

EXPLORE **Five**

1. We should compare our lives with the Ten Commandments, for example, as well as other passages in the Bible. God's Word should be the standard.

2. Be diligent; give yourself wholly (v. 15); watch . . . closely; persevere (v. 16).

3. Calls for a personal response.

EXERCISE **Closing**

Instruct your class to read through today's study passage twice. They should read silently and individually. While reading, have them ask, "What is God's message for me here?" After a few moments of reading and reflection, ask each person to take a turn sharing one lesson they learned from this passage.

Help class members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Read the Bible Aloud" (p. 319) from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4*.

Five Steps toward Faithful Discipleship

Explore Understanding God's Word

1. How can you go about reviewing life or doctrine?
2. In verses 15–16, which phrases communicate the level of effort that should be given to true discipleship?
3. As you reconsider this lesson, in what area will you first seek God's help to begin working?

Exercise Life Application

Consider this: The "anchor points" of your thoughts may evaluate your progress in discipleship. Anchor points are the things we think about when we don't have to think specifically about anything else. Where do your thoughts turn while you are stopped at a red light? What do you think of first thing in the morning and last thing at night?

When you have mental free time, consciously direct your thoughts to God. You might do this by keeping a Bible or devotional book beside your bed. When you wake up (or just before you go to sleep), read a passage. Or carry a Bible verse with you daily and review it in spare moments. Try this for three weeks. You will establish a new habit of focusing your thoughts on Jesus. This will pay big dividends in your attitudes and actions.

PERSONAL NOTES

Key Verse
I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism.

—1 Timothy 5:21

Scripture
1 Timothy 5:1–8, 16–21; 5:24—6:2

Lesson Focus
We must honor God in all of our church and family relationships.

Check Out . . .

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Lesson 5 June 30

The Church as Family

Engage Session Overview

Life is all about relationships, and church life is no exception. Using the analogy of the family, Paul wrote that Christians should treat one another as brothers and sisters. As in a healthy family, the church is to honor those in authority, deal forthrightly with sin (discipline), and guard against abusing family ties.

Yet for all this, Christians must give proper attention to their blood relatives. Family obligations are a sacred responsibility.

Examine Introduction

A generation or two ago, it was customary for Christians to call each other brother or sister. It was an acknowledgment that in the Lord, we are family. If God is our Father and we are his children, then we truly are brothers and sisters, aren't we? Maybe it's time to renew the practice of calling each other "brother" or "sister." Why not try it during this class session? What would change in your church if people began to treat one another as family?

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EVALUATE Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share encouragement or words of truth they received from the study.

ENGAGE **Opening**
Launch this lesson by singing a song about the church being God's family. For example, "The Family of God" or "Blest Be the Tie That Binds."

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXAMINE ONE: What practical advice would your class members give to a young pastor about how to relate to various age groups in your congregation?

5:1 *Do not rebuke . . . harshly, but exhort.* Paul did not require a younger person to keep silent in the presence of older, presumably more experienced, Christians. Young people are entitled to speak the truth, even when it goes counter to an older person's opinion. However, the motive and manner of dealing with an older person is important. The younger person needs to be sincerely respectful (see Lev. 19:32).

5:1 *as if he were your father.* Paul chose family relationships as a standard for relationships in the church. In Middle Eastern thinking, family connections were intensely important and carefully regulated (see Gen. 34:13; Lev. 20). God often spoke to Israel through the prophets in family terms (see Ezek. 16:35; Hos. 2). Paul counseled Timothy, therefore, to "treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity" (vv. 1–2).

EXPLORE One

1. Calls for a personal response, but it is important for people who have come from divided families to recognize the wisdom of Paul's counsel, even if we have not seen it practiced in our experience.

2. Ideas might include conducting a family life conference where problem solving from a Christian perspective is taught; mentoring Christians from dysfunctional homes; making this a continuing theme in sermons.

3. Calls for a personal response. However, it seems wise to apply both explanatory phrases to dealings with all age groups.

The Church as Family

ONE: The church is more than people; it is family (1 Tim. 5:1–2).

KJV	*NIV*
1 Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; **2** The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.	**1** Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, **2** older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

It is impossible to know the circumstances that prompted Paul to advise Timothy on dealing with church members. It is very possible that young Timothy had experienced frustrations as a pastor and had related them to Paul, his father in the faith. This might have been enough for Paul to give Timothy the perspective of a veteran apostle.

Paul instructed Timothy on how to deal with four classes of people: **older** men, **older women**, **younger men**, and **younger women** (vv. 1–2). He did not address the issue of dealing with people who were the same age as Timothy. We don't know anything about Timothy's home life, but Paul's confident advice seems to indicate that Timothy knew well the functions of a healthy family.

An older man is to be **exhorted . . . as . . . if he were your father** (v. 1). **Older women** are to be treated **as mothers** (v. 2). **Younger men** are to be treated **as brothers** (v. 1) and **younger women as sisters** (v. 2). Only when speaking of an older man and younger women did Paul offer an explanation. Older men are not to be rebuked **harshly** (v. 1) and younger women are to be treated **with absolute purity** (v. 2).

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. In today's society where an increasing number of families are divided, is Paul's advice helpful or confusing? Explain.
2. What thoughts do you have on teaching Christians from dysfunctional homes the art of healthy church-family relationships?

PERSONAL NOTES

3. Do you think it would be beneficial to apply Paul's two explanatory phrases to all four age groups (that is, do not rebuke anyone harshly, and treat everyone with absolute purity)? Why?

TWO: Like a family, the church must honor its leaders (1 Tim. 5:17–19).

KJV	*NIV*
17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. **18** For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward. **19** Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.	**17** The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. **18** For Scripture says, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." **19** Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.

In verses 17–20, Paul wrote about how to treat **the elders who direct the affairs of the church** (v. 17). The office of elder appears in the Bible first as part of the Jewish church (see Mark 8:31; Acts 4:8) and was carried into the Christian church. Barnabas and Saul delivered an offering to the elders of the Jerusalem church in Acts 11:30. Later, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in the scattered churches as they went from congregation to congregation (see 14:23).

Elders directed the affairs of the church as well as **preaching and teaching** (1 Tim. 5:17). They deliberated on questions of church policy and doctrine (see Acts 15:2) and were "shepherds of the church of God" (20:28). Peter called himself an elder (see 1 Pet. 5:1). Some present-day churches give this title to their pastors, while others reserve it for lay-members who are deeply involved in the spiritual ministry of the church.

First Timothy 5:1–2 makes it clear that every believer is worthy of respect. Because elders have added responsibilities in the church, they are worthy of added respect. **Double honor** (v. 17) may well refer to respect and financial compensation.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXAMINE **TWO:** Identify two projects your class can undertake this week to show extra honor to the spiritual leaders in your church. For example, take turns sending a note of encouragement to each board member.

5:17 *The elders.* The elders were likely the same church leaders described in 3:1–7 as "overseers."

5:17 *direct the affairs of the church.* In accordance with Jesus' instruction (see Luke 22:26), church leadership would involve serving its members for their benefit and God's glory, not ruling them for the benefit of the leaders.

5:17 *double honor.* Greater responsibility rests on leaders. To help them bear this burden, those who follow leaders should show them extra grace. Paul did not, however, here imply that anyone could take advantage of followers. All Christians are worthy of respect. While the reference to "double honor" may mean in the sense of both respect and remuneration, it is probably indicating those who preach and teach should be give ample wages, proportionate to their effective service.

5:17 *those whose work is preaching and teaching.* Paul saw the greatest responsibility resting on those who bore responsibility for instructing church members in doctrinal matters. These people needed to be most careful to teach the truth. They might also face greatest opposition from outsiders who rejected Christian teaching (see 4:1–2).

5:18 *Do not muzzle an ox.* The quotation comes from Deuteronomy 25:4. Paul here used "how much more" logic. If an ox working in the fields deserves to benefit from its work, then how much more should church leaders (created in the image of God) be rewarded for their efforts.

5:18 *The worker deserves his wages.* This verse's second quotation makes the same point as the first. But note here how Paul quoted Jesus himself (see Luke 10:7). This demonstrates that Paul knew the teachings of Jesus, and that he saw Jesus' words bearing as much authority as the Old Testament words he had just quoted.

5:19 *two or three witnesses.* Here Paul gave a specific example of how Christians should respect their leaders. Leaders will face attack, even from within the church. But believers should not believe accusations too easily. Leaders (and all Christians) should not be put "on trial" without adequate evidence. In this case, Paul employed the Old Testament principle (see Deut. 19:15; repeated by Jesus [Matt. 18:16]) of requiring at least two witnesses.

EXPLORE Two

1. Calls for a personal response.
2. Jesus dealt with this issue in Matthew 18:15–17. The basic principle is that the church is not to gossip about people but go to them directly with any concerns and seek a resolution.
3. Calls for a personal response.

EXAMINE THREE: Contrast and compare these verses with Jesus' teaching on church discipline in Matthew 18:15–35. What is the ultimate goal of discipline?

5:20 *rebuked publicly.* Leaders (as well as all Christians) need to be confronted when they have abused their positions. There is need for balance here. In cases of wrongdoing, Jesus advised a private meeting with the wrongdoer. If he or she admitted and repented of wrong, then the case should be considered closed. But if private interaction does not correct the situation, then the church should deal with the matter, especially church leaders (see Matt. 18:15–17).

5:21 *in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels.* These are the officers of the court on Judgment Day. By invoking them, Paul made it clear that Timothy (and we) should not take sin in the church lightly.

5:21 *without partiality . . . favoritism.* Perhaps Paul's own experiences of being accused unjustly (by, for example, the Corinthian church) prompted his desire to help others avoid such injustice.

5:24–25 *The sins . . . good deeds.* These words may amplify truth found in 5:19. In some cases, a person's character is quickly obvious to everyone. In other situations, the "fruit" may take a bit longer to appear. The spirit of an evil or good person will become visible in time. Sometimes Christians need to be patient, but quality of leadership will manifest itself.

The Church as Family

Do not muzzle an ox (v. 18) is from Deuteronomy 25:4. **The worker deserves his wages** is from Luke 10:7. Individually and together these references make it clear that those who invest their lives in the work of the church should be properly compensated. To respect and properly compensate the elders of the church honors them. Refusing to **entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses** (v. 19) is a matter of justice (see Deut. 19:15).

Explore Understanding God's Word

1. In what ways does your church show respect to those who are responsible for the church, for example, your pastor, Sunday school superintendent, and teachers?
2. When someone comes to you with a complaint about another person in the church, what is the Christlike response?
3. How are you doing at the task of respecting the "elders" in your church?

THREE: Like a family, the church must deal faithfully with sin (1 Tim. 5:20–21, 24–25).

KJV	*NIV*
20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.	**20** But those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning.
21 I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.	**21** I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism.
24 Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.	**24** The sins of some are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them.
25 Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.	**25** In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not obvious cannot remain hidden forever.

PERSONAL NOTES

Those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone (v. 20) might refer to those against whom charges have been proven, or some sin wholly unrelated to this matter. This much is clear: just as a family must not ignore a defiant child, so a church must not ignore a sinning member, whether that person is clergy or a lay member (see v. 21).

Dealing with the deceitfulness of the human heart is one of the unpleasant aspects of life. **The sins of some are obvious** (v. 24), while the sins of others are well hidden. The church must be willing to examine duly documented complaints against both the obviously "bad" person and the apparently "good."

Verse 25 balances Paul's discipline emphasis by saying the church should encourage those who do good. Some **good deeds are obvious** (v. 25), while others are not. The conscientious church will seek out those who do good as well as those who sin.

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. Do you agree or disagree with Paul's statement about a public rebuke in verse 20? Explain.
2. What is the most effective method of church discipline you know?

FOUR: As a family, the church must not abuse family ties (1 Tim. 6:1–2).

KJV	*NIV*
1 Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. **2** And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.	**1** All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered. **2** Those who have believing masters should not show them disrespect just because they are fellow believers. Instead, they should serve them even better because their masters are dear to them as fellow believers and are devoted to the welfare of their slaves. These are the things you are to teach and insist on.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE Three

1. Calls for a personal response.
2. Calls for a personal response.

EXAMINE **FOUR:** Use a topical or reference Bible to discover the principles for how slaves and masters are to relate according to the New Testament. Discuss how these principles apply to employers and employees.

6:1 *under the yoke of slavery.* Here Paul gave another specific application of the "respect for leaders" principle. If a society has placed a person under the authority of another, the first person should always show respect for the second, even at points where the two people disagree.

6:2 *believing masters.* According to Paul's instructions, no Christian slave could consider himself excused from respect for a Christian master merely because the two had become members of the same divine family. In fact, in accordance with 5:17, good masters who bore more responsibility for the welfare of their slaves should receive even greater respect.

EXPLORE **Four**

1. A Christian can show respect for an employer by following the employer's policies; punctuality; maintaining a good on-the-job attendance record; and displaying a positive attitude toward the employer.
2. Calls for a personal response.

EXAMINE **FIVE:** Invite a social worker or some other professional who helps older people to address your class members with a few practical suggestions for ministry to widows and widowers.

5:3 *widows.* Widows who are really in need are clearly defined in the following verses as those who have no family or visible source of income and who are devoted to the Lord (see vv. 5–6). This issue is further defined: She must be at least sixty years old and have been faithful in her marriage and family responsibilities (vv. 9–10). Paul also made clear the major temptations faced by younger widows (vv. 11–13). He recommended that they remarry and employ themselves with household concerns (vv. 14–15), including the care of widowed relatives (v. 16). The church is responsible only for those widows who have no relatives and thus are truly in need (v. 16).

5:4 *repaying.* Whatever else we owe our parents, we owe them for the gift of life.

5:6 *dead even while she lives.* This is true of anyone who lives for pleasure (see Prov. 10:23; 21:17; Eccl. 2:1; 2 Pet. 2:13).

5:6 *pleasure.* Notice the difference in this verse. Pleasure is not wrong unless we live for pleasure. This word *pleasure* in Greek means "to be voluptuous," implying an absorption with pleasure as a goal in life.

The Church as Family

All who are under the yoke of slavery (v. 1) introduces employment relationships. Although we Christians don't have slaves or slave masters, the principle apply to employers and employees. Christians are to give a full day's work for a full day's wage. In this way they give their employers **full respect**. If the employer is a believer, Christians are to **serve them even better** (v. 2). Unfortunately, Christian business owners often report that Christian employees expect extra considerations and Christian customers expect a discount. This is taking advantage of our Christian family relationship and should be discouraged.

The reason for holding up this high standard is **so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered** (v. 1).

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. In what other ways can a Christian show respect for an employer?
2. Are there situations in which a Christian is justified in asking for a discount from a Christian business owner? Explain.

FIVE: The church family does not supplant one's birth family (1 Tim. 5:3–8, 16).

KJV	*NIV*
3 Honour widows that are widows indeed. **4** But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. **5** Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. **6** But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.	**3** Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. **4** But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God. **5** The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. **6** But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.

PERSONAL NOTES

KJV	NIV
7 And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. **8** But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. **16** If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.	**7** Give the people these instructions, so that no one may be open to blame. **8** Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. **16** If any woman who is a believer has widows in her care, she should continue to help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.

Now that we have worked our way through Paul's instructions to various groups in the church, we need to go back to 1 Timothy 5:3–8, 16. The church is to provide for **those widows who are really in need** (v. 3), but families bear the first responsibility for such care. Caring for the members of one's own family is such a serious matter that one who does not **has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever** (v. 8).

This passage cuts the ground from under cults claiming that believers must forsake their families, or selfish persons who don't want to be cramped by the needs of aging relatives. The church is a family, but it does not supplant our family of origin.

Explore Understanding God's Word

1. With the state dominating the welfare business, is there any need for the church to provide relief to widows? Explain.
2. What advice would you give a new Christian for balancing church commitments with family responsibilities?

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

5:7 *Give the people these instructions.* Paul intended for Timothy to share the content of his letter so his insights might benefit the congregation.

5:8 *worse than an unbeliever.* The concept that family takes care of family was imbedded in Semitic culture (see Gen. 47:12).

5:16 *widows in her care.* Earlier in the chapter, Paul had laid out the church's responsibility to care for widows in its midst (5:3–10; see Acts 6:1). In this culture, widows left without family faced destitution. But, as Paul concluded his advice on care for widows, he clarified his counsel by requesting that families that included widows take primary responsibility for them, so that the broader church could focus its attention on widows facing greater isolation.

EXPLORE Five

1. Even with welfare, Social Security, pensions, and other government programs, many people fall through the cracks. Today's church's relief ministry should be designed for such people.

2. Calls for a personal response. One example of advice could be that a new Christian accept no more than two responsibilities in the church.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXERCISE **Closing**
Have your class members stand, form a circle, and hold hands. Ask each person to pray a sentence prayer of blessing for the person to his or her right.

Help class members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Thank-You Notes" (p. 324) from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4*.

The Church as Family

Exercise LIFE APPLICATION

Read 1 Timothy 5:7, 21 and 6:2. There Paul emphasized that Timothy was to both teach and obey his instruction. Write your answers to these three questions:

- What would I have to do to comply with God's instructions on church relationships?
- What would I have to stop doing?
- When will I begin?

Now, tuck this paper into your Bible as a reminder as you follow God's teaching in this Scripture passage.

PERSONAL NOTES

Key Verse
But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

—1 Timothy 6:11

Scripture
1 Timothy 6:3–21

Lesson Focus
Christians should beware of the distractions that cause detours from the path of righteousness.

Check Out . . .

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4
Unit: 4
Lesson: 6
Activity: Assets List
Page: 333

Lesson 6 July 7

Staying Focused on Holy Living

Engage Session Overview

Paul once expressed his concern that after having preached to others, he himself might in some way be disqualified from the prize. He then had that same concern for young Timothy. Paul was aware that there were things that could slowly but surely sidetrack Timothy from the goal of heaven. Paul was determined to identify those hazards before they caught Timothy off guard.

Examine Introduction

The visiting team is behind by one point with one second left in the game. The star player for the visitors stands fifteen feet from the hoop as the referee hands him the basketball to shoot two foul shots. As the player takes a deep breath and looks up at the hoop, the fans behind the backboard begin to wave their arms furiously and scream as loudly as possible. Why? They hope to distract the basketball player so that he will lose his concentration and miss the shots that will determine the winner of the game.

Paul wanted to warn Timothy about the distractions that would seek to draw his attention away from the essentials of the faith. These distractions included the teachers of false doctrines and the temptation of material wealth. Paul counseled Timothy

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EVALUATE Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share encouragement or words of truth they received from the study.

ENGAGE **Opening**
Play a video clip of basketball fans trying to distract a player from attempting to make a free throw from the foul line.

EXAMINE ONE: Research and discover what attitude God expects us to have toward money and possessions. Compare and contrast that with what our culture says about them. How can we develop and maintain the proper attitude?

6:3 *does not agree to the sound instruction.* Paul had already instructed Timothy not to have anything to do with false doctrine and controversies. In the following paragraphs, he detailed the characteristics that identify such people.

6:4 *understand nothing.* A know-it-all attitude not only shuts the door to learning; it betrays ignorance (see Prov. 17:28; Rev. 3:17).

6:4 *unhealthy interest* ["doting," KJV]. The word used here, *noseho*, has its root in *nosos*—disease. In the twenty-first century, this would be referred to as an addiction. Paul was warning Timothy about people who are addicted to "controversies and quarrels." Argument for the sake of argument inevitably leads to strife, malice, and friction—signs of a corrupt mind (v. 5; Prov. 30:33).

6:5 *robbed of the truth.* Truth is a priceless treasure because it is so hard to find. It is even harder to hold on to. Paul's reference to truth as a commodity that can be stolen away is intriguing (see John 10:10; Matt. 6:19).

6:5 *godliness is a means to financial gain.* The particular teaching that was robbing the Christians in Corinth of truth was evidently the falsehood that righteous living would be rewarded with material prosperity. Paul stated the correction (truth) to this lie in the next sentence: "But godliness with contentment is great gain."

6:9 *temptation . . . trap . . . foolish and harmful desires.* When greed enters the heart, it spawns an ugly progression. Temptation that is yielded to becomes a trap and sets up the scenario in which ever-increasing and insatiable desires flourish. Solomon confessed that he tried in every way to find meaning in life—pleasure, challenging projects, possessions. "I denied myself nothing my eye desired," he admitted. "So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me" (Eccl. 2:10, 17). Paul specified some of the hazards of being rich in 6:17—the temptation to arrogance and the danger of putting trust in wealth rather than in God.

6:10 *all kinds of evil.* When the love of money takes root in a person's heart and will, it sends hair-like tentacles in many directions; these flourish and ultimately bring forth the fruit of death and destruction (see Heb. 6:4; Mark 7:22; Luke 12:15; 2 Pet. 2:3).

not to take his eyes off his goal—eternal life. The result of getting distracted from the faith is more tragic than losing a game; it is missing heaven. Paul told Timothy how to avoid these harmful distractions.

ONE: Be happy with what you have (1 Tim. 6:3–10).

KJV	NIV
3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; **4** He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, **5** Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. **6** But godliness with contentment is great gain. **7** For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. **8** And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. **9** But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. **10** For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.	**3** If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, **4** they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions **5** and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. **6** But godliness with contentment is great gain. **7** For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. **8** But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. **9** Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. **10** For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

PERSONAL NOTES

Staying Focused on Holy Living

As Paul concluded his letter to Timothy, he clearly identified those teachers who would completely misunderstand and misrepresent the lifestyle of godliness. These people were conceited, contentious, and corrupt. Paul sounded a clear warning not to be swayed by these teachers, for the truth is exactly opposite of what they presented.

These teachers were arrogant and argumentative. Due to their pride, they didn't realize that their reasoning and its results were ignorant. Their interest in conflicts and fights was sickening. Their passion for debating had become a morbid obsession. It sucked the life out of them and everyone around them. But even worse was their belief that godliness is a means of acquiring wealth. Not only were they conceited and contentious, they were corrupted at the core as well.

Paul wanted Timothy (and us) to know that there is great value in godliness. True godliness leads to a contentment with one's material possessions. Godliness understands that contentment is worth more than material wealth. Godliness knows that true wealth has nothing to do with our material possessions because we can't take them with us. As Paul told the Philippians, "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation" (Phil. 4:12). What is the secret? Jesus said, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Then we trust God to take care of the rest.

The problem is not money itself but our desire for it. Notice the phrases in 1 Tim. 6:9–10. Paul pointed to people who want to be rich, people who are eager for or covet money. It is the **love of money** (v. 10), not the money itself, that is the root of the problem. This lust for money is the first step down a long road of ruin that terminates in hell. Jesus simply stated, "You cannot serve both God and money" (Matt. 6:24).

Explore Understanding God's Word

1. Why is it hard for the conceited, contentious, corrupt person to see his or her true condition?
2. How can internet forums breed unhealthy cravings for controversy and quarrels?
3. How are both rich and poor people tempted by the love of money?
4. What does godly contentment mean to you?

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE One

1. This person looks for the faults of others. When he or she does look in a mirror, such a person has a distorted view of himself or herself.

2. Many people who participate in online forums do so for the expressed purpose of fighting and arguing. Some are known as "trolls," and they have no interest in the topic at hand other than to cause dissension and then watch people fight. As with face-to-face fellowship, this is not to say internet forums are bad in and of themselves; but beware of the contentious.

3. The rich are afraid of losing their money, always wondering where it will go. The poor are anxious about getting enough money, always wondering where it will come from.

4. Calls for a personal response.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXAMINE TWO: Using online tools, ask your class members to define each of the virtues Paul told Timothy to pursue in verse 11.

6:11 *flee . . . pursue.* These verbs have a sense of continuing action. Though young ministers like Timothy are particularly susceptible to certain temptations, each age of man has its own menu of dangers. A minister must continually flee from evil and pursue what is right.

6:12 *Fight . . . Take hold.* Again, the verbs imply a continual effort. This exhortation reflects once more the picture evoked in verse 5: "robbed of the truth." The powers of hell are bent on stealing the truth away from Christ's people. We must hold tightly to the truth and fight valiantly against efforts to wrest it away (see Heb. 4:14; Job 27:6; 1 Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:14; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Thess. 2:15; Titus 1:9; Heb. 3:6; 10:23; Rev. 2:25; 3:3).

6:12 *in the presence of many witnesses.* Paul cited God and Christ Jesus as prime witnesses to our confession of faith (v. 13). In 5:21 he included the angels in the list of witnesses (see Luke 12:8).

6:13 *the good confession.* The first three gospel writers recorded only one cryptic sentence Jesus spoke when he appeared before Pilate—and that in response to Pilate's question: "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus replied: "You have said so" (see Matt. 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3). However, John, who was permitted to stay with Jesus during his hearing before the high priest and who may have been with him in Pilate's judgment hall, gave a more complete record (see John 18:33–37). The confession Jesus made was "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth" (John 18:37). It is to this confession that Paul referred (see also John 20:31).

6:14 *until the appearing.* First-century Christians anticipated that Christ would return for his people in their lifetimes. This expectation may have been founded in Jesus' answer to Peter's question about John's future: "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." When he wrote his account decades later (AD 70–85), John reflected, "Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?'" (John 21:22–23). Later in this chapter Paul referred to the time of Christ's appearing as "the coming age" (6:19).

6:15 *in his own time.* God has his own timetable upon which minutes, hours, days, months, and years have little relevance (see Ps. 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:8). Rather, he ties his timing to events and conditions (see Luke 21:24). Jesus said, "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (see Mark 13:32).

Staying Focused on Holy Living

Realizing that some had "departed from the faith," Paul gave Timothy a charge that would enable him to be faithful to God.

TWO: Be on guard against ungodliness (1 Tim. 6:11–16).

KJV	NIV
11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.	**11** But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.
12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.	**12** Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.
13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;	**13** In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you
14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:	**14** to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,
15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;	**15** which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,
16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.	**16** who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

In the midst of Paul's words on the topic of money, he gave a very personal and strong admonition to Timothy. This admonition began with a positive affirmation when Paul addressed Timothy as a **man of God** (v. 11). This was a common title for Old Testament prophets and would remind Timothy of his high calling as one who spoke for and represented God before the church. As a man of God, Timothy was given four commands.

PERSONAL NOTES

Timothy was to **flee from all this**. He was to do everything necessary to keep his distance from the love of money as well as the false doctrines, strife, and corruption that flow from it. To flee implies that something or someone is after us. Constant vigilance is needed to avoid letting a desire for wealth enter our hearts.

Not only was Timothy to run away from some things, he was to run toward some others. He was to **pursue** six Christian virtues: **righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness** (v. 11). He was to seek these virtues with the same intensity with which he avoided the lure of wealth. Both the pursuing of virtues and the fleeing of vices are lifetime activities for the person who desires to be a man or woman of God.

Paul also told Timothy to **fight the good fight** (v. 12). Literally translated, the words are "agonize the good agony." Later, in 2 Timothy 4:7, Paul testified that he had done that which he commanded Timothy. This disciplined and determined struggle was for **the faith**. Timothy was ordered to do whatever it took to maintain a current trust in the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Finally, Paul commended Timothy to **take hold of the eternal life** (v. 12). This eternal life was received when he made his confession of faith before people and God. It was something to be seized and embraced as a prized possession. Under no circumstances should it be released. Eternal life is far too precious to relinquish.

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. How do you flee from the love of money and pursue Christian virtues at the same time?
2. What are some of the battles you must wage to fight the good fight of the faith?

Having given the man of God a strong exhortation to keep his confession of faith, Paul returned to the problem of possessions.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

6:16 *unapproachable light.* God chooses to remain invisible because our physical bodies cannot tolerate that magnitude of light. When Moses was allowed a tiny glimpse of God's glory, the radiance that lingered on his face was more than his people could bear to see (see Ex. 33:18–23; 34:29–35). Paul had experienced a comparatively small, but blinding, dose of this radiance on the road to Damascus (see Acts 22:11).

EXPLORE Two

1. Love of money and Christian virtues are on opposite ends of the spectrum. Pursuing Christian virtues should take one farther away from the love of money.

2. Calls for a personal response. Everyone's battles will be different.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXAMINE THREE: Ask a student to present a brief report on how the income of North Americans compares to that of people in other parts of the world. Would Paul consider us rich? How can we "take hold of the life that is truly life"?

6:17 *those who are rich.* Jesus' comments on how hard it is for rich people to get into heaven were countercultural enough to stay in the memories of his listeners (see Matt. 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 12:14–21; 16:19–31; 18:25). Paul picked up on the fact that while Jesus often warned against the hazards of being rich (see comments on 6:9), he never condemned being rich (see 16:9).

6:17 *richly provides . . . enjoyment.* Rich or poor, God is the provider. We need to remember that all we have comes from him and it is fine to enjoy material blessings if we keep the right perspective (see notes on 1 Tim. 4:4–5).

6:18 *rich in good deeds . . . generous.* Paul defined what Jesus meant when he exhorted his disciples to "store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matt. 6:20).

6:19 *life that is truly life.* Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

6:20 *guard. . . . Turn away.* The emphasis Paul put on staying on guard against "godless chatter" and "opposing ideas" suggests that undisciplined tongues were a major problem in the Ephesian church.

6:20 *falsely called knowledge.* The mistaken translation of the word *gnosis* as "science" in the King James Version led to the false understanding that science was intrinsically evil. Rather, God encourages investigation into all facets of his creation as a way of aiding our understanding of the Creator (see Ps. 11:2). The word is more accurately translated as it is here: *knowledge* or "understanding."

6:21 *some have professed and . . . departed from the faith.* Knowledge that is based on anything other than the fear of the Lord will inevitably lead a person astray (see Job 36:3, 12; Prov. 1:7; 2:5; 3:7; 9:10; Jer. 3:15).

Staying Focused on Holy Living

THREE: Be rich in what will be rewarded (1 Tim. 6:17–21).

KJV	NIV
17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; **18** That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; **19** Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. **20** O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: **21** Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.	**17** Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. **18** Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. **19** In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. **20** Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, **21** which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the faith. Grace be with you all.

After having given Timothy some personal commands, Paul instructed him to give certain commands to **those who are rich in this present world** (v. 17). These commands include two things not to do, four things to do, and a promised benefit of obeying them. After covering the commands for those who are rich, Paul returned to give Timothy two more personal commands as he closed his first letter to this young disciple and pastor.

The two warnings to the rich are **not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth**. The wealthy have no reason to be egotistical, because all they have, including their money, comes from God, **who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment**. The wealthy would be smart not to put their trust and confidence in material possessions because they are **so uncertain**.

The four positive commands include an attitude—**put their hope in God** (v. 17)—and three actions—**to do good, to be rich**

PERSONAL NOTES

in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share (v. 18). These three actions, which could be summarized as using one's financial blessings to bless others in need, are a demonstration of an attitude of genuine trust in God. God wants the wealthy to be rivers, not reservoirs, of his financial resources.

The benefit of obeying these commands is eternal. When wealth is spent for personal gain, the benefits are temporal. When wealth is invested in others, a **firm foundation for the coming age** (v. 19) is being built. By so doing the wealthy **may take hold of the life that is truly life**. Jesus taught this same principle when he compared storing treasures on earth that can be destroyed with storing treasures in heaven that can't be destroyed (Matt. 6:19–34).

Paul's final admonitions to Timothy were reminders to stay faithful to his calling. The danger of not doing so was to risk eternal damnation. Timothy needed to be diligent to ensure that both he and his people were empowered and led by God's Spirit to stay on the course of holy living, lest they stray from the way.

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. How do you define being rich in this world?
2. What are some of the difficulties in storing treasures in heaven rather than on earth?

Exercise LIFE APPLICATION

Paul cautioned Timothy about having an interest in false doctrines and getting entrapped by a desire for money. In so doing, Paul was simply echoing what Jesus had also taught his disciples. Jesus said, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves," and, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 7:15; 6:21).

These same distractions are still among us today, and they aren't going away. Therefore, consider which of the following action steps you need to take to keep your focus on the essentials of the faith and the destiny of eternal life.

- Distinguish the false doctrines and rationalizations that are most enticing to your ego, and then find Scripture verses to refute each of them.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE Three

1. Calls for a personal response. Answers will likely include material possessions, growing bank accounts, and financial security as factors in being "rich in this present world."

2. Heavenly investments usually don't offer an immediate "return." In fact, you may not see them in your earthly lifetime. The benefits of treasures in heaven are often less tangible than earthly treasures.

EXERCISE Closing

Divide your class members into groups of two or three. Ask each group to summarize today's lesson in one sentence. After five minutes, give every group an opportunity to report their sentence summary.

Help class members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Giving Box" (p. 333) from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4*.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

Lesson 6 July 7

Staying Focused on Holy Living

- Identify the ways in which the love of money will most likely manifest itself in your daily life.
- Determine what changes you need to make in your life to have a greater degree of godly contentment, and then make those changes.
- Resolve to work at developing one of the following Christian virtues: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, or gentleness.
- Find a needy person or worthy cause in which to invest both your time and treasure, and then make those investments.

PERSONAL NOTES

Key Verse
You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

—2 Timothy 2:1–2

Scripture
2 Timothy 1:3–14; 2:1–7

Lesson Focus
Christians are to receive, obey, and pass on the essentials of the faith.

Check Out . . .

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4
Unit: 4
Lesson: 7
Activity: Praying for a Young Person
Page: 338

Pass On What Has Been Entrusted to You

Engage Session Overview

Paul and Timothy were very close friends. It was natural for Paul to address Timothy as "my dear son." Paul was instrumental in leading him to Christ. He had mentored him. They were co-laborers in spreading the gospel truth throughout Asia. Paul was now in Rome languishing away in the Mamertine Prison. He seemed to recognize that his life would soon be coming to an end. This second letter proved to be his valedictory to Timothy and to the church. Last words of our loved ones are dearly cherished.

Examine Introduction

Paul used the word *faith* several times in 1 and 2 Timothy. He was referring to the dogma or doctrine of faith rather than to the dynamics or acts of faith. It was about what he was saying or what he was preaching. Timothy had received a great heritage of faith through the ministry and labors of others. This invaluable deposit of truth entrusted to him had to be kept alive and passed on to others.

Receive this charge as if given to you personally. It was meant for every one of us.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EVALUATE Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share encouragement or words of truth they received from the study.

ENGAGE **Opening**
Guide your class members through the New Testament on a study of the word *faith*. In what ways is it used? How did Paul seem to use it in today's study passage?

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXAMINE **ONE:** Supply your class members with paper and pencils. Ask them to draw their individual spiritual family trees. Who taught them about Jesus? Who taught that person? Who are the class members teaching now?

1:3 *as my ancestors did.* This was Paul's last letter. He knew he faced imminent death. Perhaps this moved him into a bit of nostalgia. As he opened this letter, he remembered not only his own forebears, but Timothy's as well (1:5). Paul might have wished that his parents and grandparents had known the message of Jesus, but at least he saw them as worshiping the true God in accordance with the knowledge they had.

1:3 *clear conscience.* As he neared death, Paul could find peace in the service he had given to his Lord.

1:3 *night and day.* Paul was human. He may not have been sleeping all that well, feeling concern for himself and all his spiritual children. But, at least while awake at night, he prayed rather than fretted.

1:4 *Recalling your tears.* When they had last parted (see 1 Tim. 1:3), they had not known if they would see each other again.

1:4 *I long to see you.* Note Paul's wish that Timothy come to him (4:9, 21).

1:5 *grandmother Lois . . . mother Eunice.* Acts 16:1 identifies Timothy's mother as a Jew who had become a Christian. We know nothing else of Timothy's grandmother. Paul, as a spiritual father, wanted his son to do well, so he encouraged him to make his mother and grandmother proud.

1:6 *fan into flame.* These words need not imply that Timothy was falling back. Paul, from his imprisonment hundreds of miles away, wanted merely to stimulate Timothy to further growth in grace and ministry skills.

1:6 *the laying on of my hands.* Paul fondly remembered his own role in Timothy's early days as a Christian. There had been nothing magical about Paul's hands; but Paul could rejoice that God had used his ministry to form Timothy in faith.

Pass On What Has Been Entrusted to You

ONE: The good news of the gospel is to be fully accepted with deep appreciation (2 Tim. 1:3–12).

KJV	NIV
3 I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;	**3** I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.
4 Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;	**4** Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy.
5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.	**5** I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.
6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.	**6** For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.
7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.	**7** For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.
8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;	**8** So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.
9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,	**9** He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,
10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:	**10** but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.
11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.	**11** And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.

PERSONAL NOTES

KJV	NIV
12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.	**12** That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

Paul reminded Timothy of their close relationship. He informed him of the place he had in Paul's **prayers** (v. 3). We owe a great debt of gratitude to our prayer partners. To be told by our friends that we are being prayed for greatly encourages us. The affectionate words employed by Paul ("my dear son," v. 2) and the intensity of his prayers for him **night and day** (v. 3) doubtless impacted this young preacher.

Timothy's **tears** (v. 4), caused by separation from his mentor, were a reminder to Paul of his need to have Timothy rejoin the team. Also, Paul longed for the **joy** this reunion would bring. Teamwork is greatly needed in all phases of receiving, protecting, and spreading the good news of the gospel. Pooled resources and efforts provide greater impetus to this task that is assigned to all Christians. Personal evangelism is vital, but corporate evangelism must supplement it. In fact, evangelism is one of the key elements of the mission of the church. It should be prevalent in each church activity.

The **sincere faith** (v. 5; the NKJV translates it "genuine faith") of Timothy had come at great cost. Paul had poured his life into Timothy. They had shared in spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. A number of Paul's friends had already forsaken him. Paul wanted to shield Timothy from the temptation to forsake the faith he had received.

Timothy was greatly indebted to his **mother Eunice** and his **grandmother Lois** (v. 5) for his heritage of faith. They had taught him the Scriptures from childhood (3:15). His father was a Grecian and may have died before Timothy was old enough to be taught the Scriptures, or he may have been derelict in this responsibility for some other reason. However, Lois and Eunice stepped into this breach and passed the Word of God to Timothy.

Paul stressed to Timothy and to us that the gospel message is always within one generation of extinction. He was depending on

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1:7 *a spirit of timidity.* Some evidence exists to show that Timothy might have been a naturally timid person. Paul's earlier advice relating to Timothy's potentially hiding behind his youth may reflect this tendency (see 1 Tim. 4:12).

1:8 *do not be ashamed.* Using the gifts of God (power, love, and self-discipline, v. 7), Timothy could minister courageously, even to the point of suffering. God's power would enable and protect him. God's love would motivate him. God's self-discipline would hold him steadfast.

1:9 *his own purpose.* If Timothy's own choice had been primary, then Timothy would have had every right to back off. But Paul reminded Timothy that God had called him. As God called Timothy, so he calls all of us to live a holy life as well.

1:10 *destroyed death.* Not only had God chosen Timothy, but through Jesus, God had defeated Timothy's fiercest enemies. This left Timothy without excuse.

1:11 *herald.* One charged with carrying his superior's message to the broader community.

1:12 *That is why.* Paul did not try to hide from Timothy the risks he faced in this world. Paul spoke forthrightly: If you do what I have asked you to do, if you follow the model I have set (1:13–14), then you too may end up facing imprisonment and martyrdom.

1:12 *I know.* Despite the risks, Paul had made a calculated decision to remain faithful to Jesus. Paul knew that from an eternal perspective he had made the best decision.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE One

1. Calls for personal response.
2. Calls for a personal response.
3. At conversion and throughout one's Christian life there may be hostile attitudes, intentional slights, and unjust criticism. Do not develop a "persecution complex." Do not give them an excuse by inconsistent conduct.
4. Give your life if necessary. Not only be willing to suffer—but keep "sweet" while suffering.

Timothy—and us—to be the connecting link to the next generation. We must not fail in this task!

The **flame** (1:6) must be fanned into a blazing fire if we are to succeed in guarding and passing on to others the faith we have received. Our spiritual life must be renewed daily. The flame in our hearts, like the fire on the temple altar (see Lev. 6:12), is never to go out.

One of the vivid memories I have of my boyhood days on the farm was my visits to the village blacksmith shop. There was a device known as bellows. It was used to draw air through a valve to be released through a tube to fan smoldering embers into a burning flame. This was essential to heat the horseshoes so they could be shaped to fit the hooves of the horses and mules. It was great fun when the proprietor would let me work the bellows. To see the smoldering embers burst into a flaming fire was always thrilling. This spiritual exercise is what all Christians, not merely preachers, are to do. Keep the passion burning.

When the flame wanes, fear and **timid**ity (v. 7) arise. People become ashamed of biblical truth and of those who share it (vv. 7–10). This does not need to happen. God provides **power, love and self-discipline**, and the grace of God to counteract this.

The level of our commitment to the gospel should make us willing to suffer for the sake of it (vv. 11–12). Paul gave us a portrait of his commitment. He was willing to suffer, even die, for the sake of the gospel.

He believed he did not have to live, but he knew he had to stay true to his divine appointment as **a herald and an apostle and a teacher** (v. 11). He believed God would enable him **to guard** (v. 12) or keep his commitment to fulfill his call from God. He staked his life on it and won! So can we.

Explore Understanding God's Word

1. How many generations of your family are Christians?
2. Who influenced you the most to become a Christian?
3. In what ways have you suffered because you are a Christian?
4. How much are you willing to suffer to maintain your Christian faith?

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TWO: The good news of the gospel is to be guarded tenaciously (2 Tim. 1:13–14).

KJV	NIV
13 Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. **14** That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.	**13** What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. **14** Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Acceptance of the good news is only the first part of our Christian heritage. It is to be strictly adhered to, guarded, and kept inviolate and pure. It must not be neglected, rejected, misinterpreted, or misapplied. The whole body of truth has been preserved for us. It is authentic and trustworthy. Its critics have tried to destroy it. Some of its friends have abused it. Yet it still stands. Keep it that way! This can only be accomplished by the aid of the **Holy Spirit** (v. 14). The Holy Spirit lives in the Christian for that purpose. He is the secret of true orthodoxy.

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. On a scale of one to ten, how well do you think you are guarding your Christian heritage? Explain your rating.
2. How may we abuse the truth?

THREE: The good news of the gospel must be passed on to the next generation (2 Tim. 2:1–7).

KJV	NIV
1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. **2** And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.	**1** You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. **2** And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXAMINE **TWO:** Discuss the possible reasons for Christians needing the Holy Spirit's help to guard the gospel entrusted to them.

1:13 *pattern of sound teaching.* Paul knew he had not been able to deal with all the issues the Christians would face. But he was satisfied that he had modeled the method for discerning sound doctrine. Every belief must be based on the central truth of Christ as the one who both provides and works out salvation. Every decision must be made on the basis of pleasing him; every doctrine must be consistent with his teaching and example (see Phil. 2:1–5).

1:14 *Guard the good deposit.* Paul used the same word (*guard*) to describe both God's faithfulness to his children (1:12) and the loyalty Paul wanted Timothy to maintain. As God guards what we have given to him (ourselves), so we should guard (with the help of his Spirit) what he has given to us (himself, his truth, his power, and his love).

EXPLORE **Two**

1. Ways of guarding one's Christian heritage could include living a consistent Christian life, testifying to a personal relationship with Christ, and seeking to persuade others to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior.

2. We abuse the truth by claiming for Scripture and experience more than, as well as less than, the context allows; being untactful or too aggressive in seeking others to accept the truth; and failing to share the good news of Christ with others.

EXAMINE **THREE:** Use a chart with three columns to compare soldiers, athletes, and farmers. How are we to be like each one? What do all three have in common? (If you have a class of ten or more class members, divide them into three groups and assign one column to each group. Provide time for the groups to report to the whole class.) Discuss how these three occupations shed light on Paul's call to pass on the gospel to faithful persons.

2:1 *be strong.* After giving information about those who had not stood with Paul (1:15) and those who had (1:16–18), the apostle returned to his previous theme: Timothy, I never want to hear that you have deserted our Lord.

2:2 *entrust to reliable people.* Paul did not want Timothy to be a weak link in the chain. Jesus had appeared to Paul. Paul had spoken to Timothy's mother and grandmother. They (and Paul) had shared the message with Timothy. If Timothy shared the message strongly with local church leaders, then they could continue in this chain of evangelism and discipleship, even after Timothy had traveled to Rome to be with Paul. Others could carry on long after both Paul and Timothy were gone.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

2:3 *Join . . . in suffering.* Paul continued his pep talk with the use of three analogies: Timothy should serve as a dedicated soldier, compete as a wise athlete, and toil as a hardworking farmer. As an ideal soldier never allows less important matters to distract him from his mission, so Timothy must focus on the cause to which God had called him (see 2:4).

2:5 *according to the rules.* One who wins by cheating does not truly win. Such a one is disqualified in disgrace. With this picture, Paul encouraged Timothy not only to move toward God's goals, but to use only God-appointed means to achieve his purposes.

2:6 *receive a share.* Paul used psychology well. He plainly described Timothy's short-term future as difficult, but also helped Timothy keep one eye on the eternal rewards he would receive.

2:7 *Reflect on what I am saying.* Paul wanted Timothy to let these images soak into his mind. No quick and easy decision to stay the course would keep him there. Only a seriously considered fixed resolve would enable Timothy to fulfill his ministry through his difficult circumstances.

Pass On What Has Been Entrusted to You

KJV	NIV
3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.	**3** Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.
4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.	**4** No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.
5 And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.	**5** Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules.
6 The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.	**6** The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.
7 Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.	**7** Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

Human effort alone is insufficient for this assigned task. The secret is to **be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus** (v. 1). It is to be done in his name, for his glory, by his grace, and through his provided strength.

Paul urged Timothy to pass on **the things you have heard me say** (v. 2). The whole body of truth, not merely snips or pieces, is to be passed on. Additional witnesses are needed. The Christian heritage is to be entrusted to, or deposited with, reliable, competent, dependable, and trustworthy witnesses. Training and commitment are required.

Our assignment is important and difficult. Paul used three graphic illustrations to drive home this premise: the brave **soldier** (v. 4), the competitive **athlete** (v. 5), and the **hardworking farmer** (v. 6). An understanding of the requirements for the tasks cited will help us in passing on our Christian heritage.

A good soldier is to be brave, totally given to their task, unflinching in the rigors of warfare, and loyal to their country. Soldiers of the cross can learn much from our brave soldiers.

A competitive athlete trains for her task, keeps in good condition for her sport, strains every muscle in her body to win, and plays by the rules. Those who won the gold, as well as those who were stripped of their medals for breaking the rules during the Olympic Games, testify eloquently to all Christians. Run to win, and do not deviate from the truth.

PERSONAL NOTES

Pass On What Has Been Entrusted to You

A **hardworking farmer** teaches us how the harvest of a shared heritage is achieved. The farmer is motivated by the expected harvest that is needed to feed himself and a hungry world. Much hard work, investment of time and money, anxious waiting, and patient faith must come first. The harvest follows. The thought of the coming harvest drives him onward. When the harvest is completed, he feels amply rewarded. Christian harvesters can expect to feel "It will be worth it all when we see Jesus," and so will all the others to whom they passed on their heritage of faith.

Explore Understanding God's Word

1. How can we properly test the genuineness of our faith?

Exercise Life Application

We are indebted to others for our Christian faith. God planned it "before the beginning of time" (2 Tim. 1:9). Christ died to provide it for us (v. 10). The Holy Spirit wrought it in our hearts (v. 14). A Paul, Eunice, Lois, father, mother, grandmother, pastor, evangelist, or Sunday school teacher—someone shared their heritage with us. It is ours to squander or to pass on.

Our challenge is to pass it on. We dare not end with the present generation.

Paul urged the Corinthians, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves" (2 Cor. 13:5). C. H. Spurgeon explained that "the best way to see how crooked a stick may be is to place a straight stick beside it."

The standard must be the Word of God. Let the Holy Spirit administer the test today.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE Three

1. Calls for a personal response. Let the Holy Spirit work in times of testing.

EXERCISE Closing

Today's key verse (see 2 Tim. 2:1–2) has been called the "Triple-Two Principle" because of the three twos in the reference. Take a few minutes to work with your class members on memorizing this discipleship principle. Challenge your class members to join you in quoting the "Triple-Two Principle" three to five times a day this week. Each time, ask God to make you a faithful person "qualified to teach."

Help class members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Spiritual Family Tree" (p. 338) from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4*.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EVALUATE Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share encouragement or words of truth they received from the study.

ENGAGE **Opening**
Quote the "Triple-Two Principle" in unison as a class. Allow individuals time to report on what the Lord showed them through this exercise.

Lesson 8 July 21

Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing

Key Verse
Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

—2 Timothy 2:15

Scripture
2 Timothy 2:14–26

Lesson Focus
All Christians must ready themselves for the work of the gospel.

Check Out . . .

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4
Unit: 4
Lesson: 8
Activity: My House
Page: 347

Engage Session Overview

As Paul wrote his last letter, he was very aware of how important it was that workers following him walk boldly forward with the truth of the gospel. Paul knew God had a special job for Timothy to complete, and Paul warned those at Ephesus not to get sidetracked in the process. As we look to the next generation of Christians coming behind us, we must also strive to focus on the true message of the gospel.

Examine Introduction

Someone overheard a group of high school students as they discussed their teachers. The students knew which classes were considered more fun because they were able to get the teacher easily distracted from the subject by a well-placed comment or question. The students agreed that it could take a series of questions at times, but the goal was to work together to manipulate the conversation until work in class had stopped.

As amusing as that sounds, the world is made up of former high school students still trying to bend, twist, and change the facts to get a reaction from those around them. We all know at least one person who likes to argue over everything. The subject matter isn't the issue; it is the process of arguing and the game of control. As we

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study today's Scripture, keep in mind that Paul was very aware of that type of trap in the well-meaning Christian's life. Take a minute now and summarize your speaking style. Are you someone who enjoys a good argument? Perhaps you know which buttons to push to get a reaction from those around you. Let's join Paul as he sought to calm any fears Timothy may have had in his work at Ephesus.

ONE: The approved worker is focused on the task (2 Tim. 2:14–21).

KJV	NIV
14 Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.	**14** Keep reminding God's people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.
15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.	**15** Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.
16 But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.	**16** Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.
17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;	**17** Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,
18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.	**18** who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.
19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.	**19** Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."
20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.	**20** In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXAMINE **ONE:** Display paper plates and plastic tableware alongside some fine china and silverware. Ask volunteers to read 2 Timothy 2:20–21 in a number of versions. Discuss what this image might mean for the choices and decisions we make every day.

2:14 *Keep reminding God's people.* One of Satan's favorite weapons in his war against the church is a wedge. The Corinthian church drew the largest amount of attention from Paul on the subject of controversies within the church (see 1 Cor. 1:10–11, 4:7, 11:17–22, 12:25; Rom. 13:13, 16:17). His ongoing concern about such divisions is a reflection of Christ's purpose for his church (see John 17:21–23). Paul had already addressed the problem in another letter (see 1 Tim. 6:4; James 4:1–3).

2:14 *those who listen.* Quarrels within the church are a lose-lose proposition. Even innocent bystanders are damaged.

2:15 *Do your best . . . not . . . ashamed.* Because a pastor largely sets his own agenda, it is important to keep his priorities in proper order. Paul reminded Timothy that his first responsibility was to God, and that requires diligent study of and adherence to the "word of truth," in order not to be ashamed.

2:16 *godless chatter.* Paul launched his first letter to Timothy with an admonition to teach his people not to waste their time in meaningless talk (see 1 Tim. 1:3–7), and closed with an admonition for Timothy to personally avoid godless chatter (6:20). Here he added weight to the warning by pinpointing the results: "those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly" (see also Prov. 10:19; Eccl. 5:3).

2:17 *spread like gangrene.* Gangrene results when the circulation of blood is interrupted to a part of the body. If the gangrenous area is contaminated, it can threaten the life of the whole body. Treatment consists of removing all the dead tissue in the affected area—perhaps involving amputation. Paul's use of such a strong metaphor—perhaps inspired by the fact that he was dictating the letter to a doctor (Luke)—underlines the danger of unchecked godless talk within the church.

2:17 *Hymenaeus and Philetus.* Paul had already mentioned Hymenaeus in his first letter to Timothy (see 1 Tim. 1:19–20). In that reference, he clearly stated that Hymenaeus had "suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith," and that he, Paul, had therefore "handed [him] over to Satan." Philetus is not mentioned elsewhere. Their particular false doctrine was the assertion that the only resurrection is "spiritual rebirth (from death to life). . . . This teaching, if allowed to go unchecked, would spread to denial of Christ's physical resurrection and second coming. The hope of meeting loved ones who have died was being destroyed. The prospect of

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reigning with Christ was removed. The implication to be drawn was that we should be reigning now, instead of suffering" (Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 267; see also 1 Thess. 4:13–15; 2 Tim. 2:18; 1 Cor. 15:12–34).

2:19 *God's solid foundation.* Jesus Christ is the foundation to which Paul referred. "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11; see also Isa. 28:16; Luke 6:48–49). Matthew Henry commented, "Leave out the doctrine of his atonement, and there is no foundation for our hopes."

2:19 *sealed with this inscription.* A seal was an official mark of authorship or ownership. For example, Joseph was given Pharaoh's ring when he was placed in command of the country of Egypt (see Gen. 41:42), symbolizing Joseph's right to act with the force of Pharaoh's authority behind him (*Holman Bible Dictionary*).

2:20 *some are for special purposes and some for common use.* The emphasis seems to be on the quality and value of the vessel. Only the finest, cleanest articles could be used for special purposes.

2:21 *cleanse themselves from the latter.* "Latter" applies to the common purposes for which some articles are used. "Here Paul urged Timothy to be the kind of person Christ could use for his noblest purposes. Don't settle for less than God's highest and best. Allow God to use you as an instrument of his will" (*Life Application Notes*).

Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing

KJV	*NIV*
21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.	**21** Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

Second Timothy 2 is a story of action. Paul wrote a series of quick instructions to encourage his friend Timothy. It is possible that Timothy, being timid by nature, felt a little overwhelmed by the events taking place around him. The young church was changing hands. There were now many believers who had never met any of the apostles or witnessed the miracles of Christ. Hymenaeus and Philetus were among those who were introducing ideas contrary to the Christian faith.

As Paul neared the end of his life, we sense his urgency as he reminded Timothy that although circumstances were changing, God's solid foundation would continue to stand firm. Paul sought to ready Timothy for the work ahead. Having told Timothy to be like a good soldier (see 2 Tim. 2:3), an athlete (v. 5), and a farmer (v. 6), Paul continued by asking the Christian to **present** himself as **a worker who does not need to be ashamed** (v. 15).

Each one of these metaphors suggests activity. Paul knew that a worker must exert strength and effort to overcome obstacles and complete the task at hand. In most jobs today, accidents happen when workers lose concentration and do not pay attention to their tasks. Paul warned Timothy not to get sidetracked by arguments and discussions of no value. Paul reminded Timothy not to waste words or get caught in quarreling and godless chatter. Hymenaeus and Philetus had departed from the truth. The word *departed* means to move aimlessly without a goal. Paul spent time reminding Timothy of the importance of being as direct and focused as possible to the work he had been given.

Who would know more about the value of making the most of the time available than someone whose life on earth was short? The same is just as true today. Sometimes, too much time is spent worrying about doctrinal differences and methods of worship. We need to be careful not to get caught up in conversations over matters that could turn the hearer from the truth of the solid foundation of Christ.

PERSONAL NOTES

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. How important is focus in the local church today?
2. What are some practical things you could say when faced with a controversial question?
3. How do you think this letter was affected by the fact that Paul was writing near the end of his life and while he was in prison?

The metaphor of the worker continues as Paul told the reader that we must be in a position of readiness, so as to be useful to the Master and prepared to do his good work. Paul did not leave us guessing how we are to present ourselves to that task. He backed up his expectations with action words. As he told us what we must do, he offered a way to do it.

TWO: The worker must take action (2 Tim. 2:22–23).

KJV	*NIV*
22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. **23** But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.	**22** Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. **23** Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.

Each day, we make choices. Some are small and incidental. Others can be life changing or even life threatening. The warning in our Scripture today is to not get caught up in things that do not profit the work of the gospel. The actions we take must be based upon the focus we know Christ has for our lives. Paul told Timothy to **flee the evil desires of youth** (v. 22). Just as a worker is trained, so we must be trained in the things that are important to God. Sin often comes in inviting packages.

We often read the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife as if Joseph's running away was the easiest decision he'd ever made.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE One

1. Calls for personal response. In any age, if the church focuses on the wrong priorities, it has an adverse effect on the kingdom.

2. Calls for a personal response. It's always safest to point people back to God's Word. Other verse and passages may have a bearing on the controversial question.

3. Paul's concern was for the welfare and well-being of the church. As he looked forward to heaven, he was also feeling concerned for the work at hand.

EXAMINE TWO: Compare these verses with Galatians 5:19–26. What words of advice would you give to a new Christian based on these two passages?

2:22 *Flee . . . pursue.* Paul reinforced the command he gave Timothy in his first letter (see 1 Tim. 6:11).

2:22 *the evil desires of youth.* Youth has its own special temptations, coupled with a lack of experience that leaves a young person particularly vulnerable (see Prov. 7:6–23). In other places, Paul listed some of the evils from which people of all ages should flee: sexual immorality (see 1 Cor. 6:18) and idolatry (10:14).

2:23 *foolish and stupid arguments.* A lot of unseen damage can be inflicted by "lighthearted" banter and arguments over nonessentials (see comments on 2:16; 2:17).

EXPLORE Two

1. Paul considered these arguments of no value (2:14); they also ruin the listener; spread like gangrene; are foolish and stupid; and are a trap of the devil.

2. Calls for a personal response. Any time we are not focused on the task, we are diverting our energies away from kingdom interests and run the risk of missing God's plan for us.

3. Calls for a personal response. Stay consistently in the Word, get an accountability partner, get involved in Christian worship and fellowship.

EXAMINE THREE: Before reading these verses, ask each person in the class to finish the following sentence: "When I find a person who believes something that's wrong I . . ." After reading the verses, discuss how your responses may need to change.

2:24 *the Lord's servant.* Paul's intent was to give final instructions to Timothy regarding the character and conduct of pastors. Every Christian, however, would do well to adopt this rule.

2:24 *kind . . . able to teach, not resentful.* A lack of gentleness drains teaching of effectiveness (see Prov. 16:21, 23; 31:26; Mal. 2:6; Eph. 6:4).

2:25 *Opponents.* The other side of the coin is the necessity for a learner to have a teachable attitude (see Deut. 33:3; Ps. 50:17; Prov. 1:8; 8:10; 13:1, 13; 23:12; Isa. 30:9; 1 Thess. 4:8; 2 Thess. 3:14).

2:25 *repentance leading them to . . . the truth.* Repentance is the first step toward spiritual sanity.

2:26 *escape from the trap . . . captive.* Anyone who does not walk in truth is in the power of Satan (see 1 John 3:10; 8:41–46).

Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing

The word *flee* means to run from danger or evil. For Joseph, staying would have meant both danger and evil. But fleeing did not come without reason. Joseph was able to run because he had learned to **flee the evil desires of youth, and** to **pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace**. Joseph's reason was his love for God. A lifetime of serving God had readied him for this test.

Today's lesson gives us the reason as well. We are to flee evil so we can pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace. An entire study could be done on pursuing righteousness. Pursuing righteousness requires a proper mindset, focus, humility, and obedience. All are characteristics of a worker approved by God.

Explore Understanding God's Word

1. What did Paul think of foolish arguments that produce quarrels?
2. Why is it important for the worker to remain focused on the task?
3. What steps can you take to flee evil and pursue righteousness?

As the chapter concludes, we are given the last metaphor of living for Christ.

THREE: The worker's objective is to be used for Christ (2 Tim. 2:24–26).

KJV	*NIV*
24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,	**24** And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.
25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;	**25** Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,
26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.	**26** and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

PERSONAL NOTES

Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing

Paul speaks of the duties of **the Lord's servant** in both negative and positive aspects. We **must not be quarrelsome**. On the other hand, we **must be kind** and we must **gently** instruct our **opponents**. When a person is quarrelsome, they may win an argument, but lose the war. In this case, they may win the verbal battle and even embarrass the opponent, but lose the opportunity to influence them for Christ. Teaching with gentleness is more likely to lead to **repentance**. Our goal is to help them **escape from the trap of the devil**, not just to show our prowess with words and ideas.

Notice the use of the word **everyone** when referring to whom we should be kind. We all know how easy it is to be kind to those whose company we enjoy. Paul told us to carry on the spirit of kindness to all with whom we come in contact. We are to work in partnership with God to perform his work through us. All of this is to be used by God to lead the hearer to repentance.

Dr. Bob Black observes: "In this spiritual warfare, sinful people may act like enemy combatants, but they're actually POWs," in view of the fact that the enemy **has taken them captive to do his will**.

Explore Understanding God's Word

1. What are some of the duties of a peacemaker?
2. What is the example of servanthood that Christ left us?
3. How can this attitude of peace be of help to furthering the gospel among those you know?

Exercise Life Application

Paul's main concern was that the work continue. The baton was being passed to the next generation of believers. Timothy was to concentrate on the task, work heartily at it, and remember who was in charge. For further study:

- Do a word study of the six metaphors for Christian living found in 2 Timothy 2. Notice the similarities in the requirements for each.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE **Three**

1. A peacemaker should be a type of ambassador. The peacemaker's own agenda is not the most important issue.
2. Many of the stories about Christ are examples of servanthood—foot-washing, healing of the woman who touched his cloak, honoring his mother's wishes at the wedding.
3. Calls for a personal response.

EXERCISE **Closing**

Challenge individuals to rewrite today's key verse in their own words to make its meaning and application clear to them.

Help class members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Word Association" (p. 347) from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4*.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

Lesson 8 July 21

Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing

- For one week, make a conscious effort to act as a peacemaker among all with whom you come in contact. Keep a journal of the victories and challenges you encounter.

Spend some time in honest prayer with God. Go before him as a worker. Allow him to show you any areas that may be hindering your progress. Rededicate yourself to his plans for your life.

PERSONAL NOTES

Key Verse
All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

—2 Timothy 3:16–17

Scripture
2 Timothy 3:1–17

Lesson Focus
God's Word has the power to change lives.

Check Out . . .

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4
Unit: 4
Lesson: 9
Activity: Bible Literacy
Page: 352

God's Word for All Seasons

Engage Session Overview

The world and even the church today are filled with people who would steal the hearts and minds of people away from the truth of God. It is evident that we are living in the last days. But God's true servants must remain faithful to him even in the face of any persecution they may have to endure, no matter how unpopular the message might be. In the end, his Word will win out because it is God-breathed. It has within itself the power to change lives.

Examine Introduction

Research shows that 82 percent of Americans have a Bible in their home and 57 percent wish they read it more. Unfortunately, only 14 percent will read the Bible daily, followed by 13 percent who use it several times in a typical week, 8 percent use it once a week, 6 percent about once a month, and 8 percent use it three to four times a year. Out of four possible choices—coffee, something sweet, social media and the Bible—37 percent chose coffee as essential to their day. Another 28 percent say something sweet is necessary, and 16 percent say the Bible is a must. About the same number (19 percent) chose social media as important to their day. (Source: American Bible Society, "State of the Bible 2018," based on research conducted among

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EVALUATE Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share encouragement or words of truth they received from the study.

ENGAGE **Opening**
Using a smartphone, conduct several man-on-the-street interviews. Ask passersby to answer one or two questions about the Bible. For example: "Name two of the four gospels"; or, "What is the greatest commandment?" Select a few of the responses to play as you start this lesson.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXAMINE ONE: Supply your class with a table loaded with poster board, markers, crayons, paint and brushes, construction paper, scissors, tape, glue, and newspapers and magazines from which class members can clip photos, headlines, or other lettering. Form groups and encourage them to create their own posters to illustrate the characteristics of the "last days."

3:1 *terrible times.* Jesus gave a detailed warning about the last days ("end of the age") in Matthew 24—25. Matthew Henry commented, "Even in gospel times there would be perilous times; on account of persecution from without, still more on account of corruptions within."

3:2 *People will be.* Rather than describe the tumultuous political and security problems of the last days, Paul focused on the moral disintegration that will characterize those times (vv. 2–5). The result is a list of appalling character qualities that reads like this morning's newspaper: self-centered, greedy, proud, abusive, defiant, ungrateful, evil, unloving, unforgiving, malicious, brutal, loving evil—in short, out-of-control. However, Paul had described earlier the same chaotic conditions in his own time (see Rom. 1:18–32). Matthew Henry wrote that when people are eager for what they can get and anxious to keep what they have, it makes them dangerous to one another.

3:5 *form of godliness.* Unfortunately, the people Paul described (3:2-5) were professing Christians. Kent wrote, "In the difficult seasons which grip the church from time to time there will be found many who are pleasure-lovers rather than God-lovers. Personal pleasure is paramount in their lives" (*The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 275; see also Isa. 5:20; Rom. 1:32; Titus 1:16).

3:6 *worm their way into homes.* Since women did not have many educational opportunities in the first century, they were particularly susceptible to con artists and charlatans. J. N. D. Kelly calls them "religious dillettantes" (*Pastoral Epistles*, p. 196). Verse 7 suggests they may have been subject to the latest spiritual fads. Many believers, both men and women, in the twenty-first century would do well to be careful lest we are "always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth."

U.S. adults by the Barna Group in March 2018, https://1s712.americanbible.org/cdn-www-ws03/uploads/content/State_of_the_Bible_2018_Report_-_Han_Solo.pdf, accessed October 2018). Our lack of Bible knowledge makes us vulnerable to almost any new idea that comes along. What is your regular habit of studying the Bible?

ONE: The last days will be marked by ungodliness (2 Tim. 3:1–9).

KJV	*NIV*
1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.	**1** But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days.
2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,	**2** People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,
3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,	**3** without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good,
4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;	**4** treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—
5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.	**5** having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.
6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,	**6** They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires,
7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.	**7** always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth.
8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.	**8** Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected.
9 But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as their's also was.	**9** But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.

PERSONAL NOTES

Paul and Timothy lived in very difficult and trying times, especially for committed followers of Christ. At the time of writing this letter, Paul himself was in a Roman prison cell awaiting execution at the hands of Nero. But he anticipated and even expected that he and other followers of Christ would have to endure **terrible times** (v. 1) before the Lord returned. In Jewish thought, which predominated in the early church, all time was divided into two segments—this present age and the age to come. The future age would be ushered in by the "day of the Lord," a time when God would personally intervene in human history. But it would be preceded by a time of terror, when evil would wage its final assault on the world's foundations. These "last days" of the present age would be marked by a great increase of ungodliness, both inside and outside the church.

Paul's list of characteristics for these days reads eerily like those that describe our own day. He said people will be **lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God** (vv. 2–4). It's not a pretty list. In fact, it looks a great deal like the regular fare of prime-time television. But the scary thing is that these people he described are not just worldly sinners outside the church—they are right in its very midst. They even have **a form of godliness but** deny **its power** (v. 5). Is it any wonder that God's judgment will begin within his own household?

Paul told Timothy that this list even characterizes some Christian leaders. They were spiritual predators who **worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women** (v. 6). Since "the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine" but "will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear" (2 Tim. 4:3), these people will always have an audience. In spite of their education, and in some cases perhaps due to it, they are **always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth** (v. 7). They are like **Jannes** and **Jambres** (v. 8), two of Pharaoh's magicians who, legend says, followed the Israelites to the promised land, continually stealing the hearts of the people from the truth of God. They typify all of those who oppose the purposes of God and the work of his true leaders. In the end, they will be known by their fruit.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

3:7 *always . . . never.* Learning is futile if it does not lead a person to embrace the truth.

3:8 *Jannes and Jambres.* These names are not mentioned anywhere else in Scripture. The consensus of Bible scholars, consistent with Jewish tradition, is that these were the names of the Egyptian magicians who attempted to discredit Moses by producing the same miraculous signs he did (see Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7, 19).

3:9 *will not get very far.* There were limits to what Pharaoh's magicians could do (see Ex. 8:19). In the same way, anyone who operates without the power of God will sooner or later fizzle so thoroughly that "their folly will be clear."

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE One

1. Ungodliness prevails within our society. Our days are like the days of Noah and the days of Lot, of which our Lord warned us.

2. They gain an audience through social media, books, radio, TV, video, music.

EXAMINE TWO: Recruit one or two class members to report on the persecution faced by Christians in various parts of the world.

3:10 *know all about.* Paul had no hidden agenda, nothing to cover up. In fact, he was constantly aware that his life, character, and relationships were integral to his teaching (see 1 Thess. 1:4–6).

3:11 *persecutions.* Paul mentioned persecution many times as a simple fact of life for a Christian. His statement, "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (3:12) is an example (see also Matt. 5:10–12; 24:9; John 15:20; 1 Cor. 4:12; 2 Cor. 4:9; 1 Thess. 3:4, 7; Rev. 2:10.) Paul could be matter-of-fact about such an apparent negative result of his faith, because he was convinced that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ (see Rom. 8:38–39).

3:13 *impostors . . . deceiving and being deceived.* Again, Paul was pointing out dangers from within the church. Many false teachers would have no credibility were they not members of the church fellowship. We are more likely to be misled by "wolves in sheep's clothing" (Matt. 7:15). One reason false teachers within the church are so dangerous is that they deceive themselves—sincerely believing what they teach.

3:14 *continue . . . because you know.* Constancy of belief is only beneficial and valid if a person's belief system is founded on truth. Therefore, it is important to be careful in choosing our teachers. That is why Paul and the other New Testament writers put such emphasis on pure doctrine and consistency between beliefs and lifestyle (see Rom. 2:21).

3:15 *from infancy.* Early childhood is the most effective time for spiritual instruction—as many young parents are fully realizing in our time. The Bible contains repeated admonitions and examples in reference to parents instructing their children and guiding their feet into godly paths (see Deut. 7:4–9; Eph. 6:4).

3:15 *make you wise.* The psalmist understood that God's Word, embedded in his mind and life, was what made his successes possible (see Ps. 119:1–8). In Psalm 119 alone, he mentioned the function of God's Word in his life at least twenty-four times (see vv. 9, 15, 133 in particular).

God's Word for All Seasons

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. Is there any evidence that we are living in the last days? What is it?
2. How do ungodly leaders gain an audience in Christian circles?

Paul was known by his fruit as well. And he continually invited people to watch him and follow his example.

TWO: The man or woman of God will be marked by faithfulness (2 Tim. 3:10–15).

KJV	NIV
10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,	**10** You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance,
11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.	**11** persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.
12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.	**12** In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,
13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.	**13** while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.
14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;	**14** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,
15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.	**15** and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

PERSONAL NOTES

If Timothy needed a model to copy for his own service to the Lord, he only needed to look as far as Paul, his mentor. As a young man, Timothy had joined Paul on his second missionary journey and had ample opportunity to observe Paul's true character in both good times and bad. Timothy had many occasions to observe Paul's **teaching**, **way of life**, **purpose**, **faith**, **patience**, **love**, **endurance**, **persecutions**, and **sufferings** (vv. 10–11). Because he was so single-minded in his desire to live a godly life, Paul was a model of faithfulness.

But faithfulness to the Lord is not a guarantee for a life free of problems. Paul's faithfulness came at a price. On many occasions, he was a target of persecution. In Pisidian Antioch, men and women of high standing stirred up persecution against him and expelled him from the region (see Acts 13:50–51). At Iconium, Paul discovered a plot among the Gentiles and Jews to stone him, but he fled before they could carry it out (see 14:4–6). In Lystra, some Jews from Antioch and Iconium stirred up the crowds to stone Paul, after which they dragged him outside the city thinking he was dead (see 14:19). Paul was conscious of the fact that **everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted** (2 Tim. 3:12). Jesus himself said that if the world persecuted him, it would surely persecute his disciples as well (see John 15:18–21). Concerning the hardships, Paul said, **the Lord rescued me from all of them** (2 Tim. 3:11). Yet at the same time, he was also aware that he would probably not be delivered from his present imprisonment (see 4:6).

As a young pastor charged with giving faithful leadership to the church in Ephesus, Timothy was encouraged by Paul to **continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of** (3:14). Paul mentioned two things that would help Timothy in that endeavor. One was that Timothy knew those who had taught him (Paul and the other apostles). Their lives embodied the truth of the message. Second, he had known the Scriptures from infancy. A godly heritage is a tremendous asset in ministry.

Timothy's knowledge of Scripture would be a great help to him in discerning truth from error. After all, it is the Scriptures that make us **wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus** (v. 15).

PERSONAL NOTES

EXPLORE Two

1. Calls for a personal response.
2. Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulation." He himself was crucified. A godly life is an indictment on a sinful world.
3. Calls for a personal response.

EXAMINE **THREE:** Discuss how the Bible can teach, rebuke, correct, and train us for all kinds of good works. What do we need to learn? What needs to be rebuked or corrected? What kinds of training do we need to do good works?

3:16 *Scripture.* In the New Testament this word *(graphe)* always refers to the "collection of sacred books, regarded as given by inspiration of God, which we usually call the Old Testament" (see also 2 Tim. 3:15–16; John 20:9; Gal. 3:22; 2 Pet. 1:20). "It was God's purpose thus to perpetuate his revealed will. From time to time he raised up men to commit to writing in an infallible record the revelation he gave. The 'Scripture,' or collection of sacred writings, was thus enlarged from time to time as God saw necessary. We have now a completed 'Scripture,' consisting of the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament canon in the time of our Lord was precisely the same as that which we now possess under that name. He placed the seal of his own authority on this collection of writings, as all equally given by inspiration" (*Eaton's 1897 Bible Dictionary*; see also Matt. 5:17; 7:12; 22:40; Luke 16:29, 31).

3:16 *God-breathed.* The *Discipline of The Wesleyan Church 2016* states: "We believe that the books of the Old and New Testaments constitute the Holy Scriptures. They are the inspired and infallibly written Word of God, fully inerrant in their original manuscripts and superior to all human authority" (par. 218). Though the styles of the writers vary according to personality and experience, everything included in the canon of Scripture, as we know it, is there by the direct inspiration of God, whose Word it is. The *NAB Commentary* states it more concisely: The Bible is "the word of God in human language."

3:16 *useful.* Head knowledge of the Bible is useless if it is not combined with faith that leads to action (see Heb. 4:2; Luke 6:49; James 1:25).

God's Word for All Seasons

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. Describe the character of the person who discipled you in your faith.
2. Why should a Christian expect to be persecuted by the world?
3. What things can you do to ensure your faithfulness to the Lord?

Timothy's knowledge of the Scriptures would be a great help to him in discerning truth from error.

THREE: The Word of God is the anchor for truth (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

KJV	*NIV*
16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: **17** That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.	**16** All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, **17** so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

There is no shortage of books today. Every community has its own public library and possibly a number of bookstores. You can find books that entertain, books that teach, books that "tell it all," books that arouse your fantasy, and books that lift your spirit. But there is one book (or collection of books) that stands in a category all its own. It has stood the test of time (it is two to three thousand years old) and refuted the charges of its critics time and again. And the reason it is so unique is that it is **God-breathed** (v. 16). Its stories and ideas come from the heart and mind of God himself. Over time he chose certain people through whom he revealed himself and his message of salvation to the world. They wrote with their own distinct styles and language, but what they wrote was the very word of God.

The wisdom of the world is a fleeting thing, often changing from one minute to the next. But God himself never changes,

PERSONAL NOTES

and because of that, his Word has proven itself to be an anchor for people's souls. It is **useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness** (v. 16). Because it is God-breathed, the Holy Spirit is able to take the words and apply them to every situation one might face. The writer of Hebrews remarked that the Word of God is "living and active . . . it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit . . . ; it judges the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). John Wesley was a well-educated and well-read man of his day, yet he regarded himself as a man of only one book. He, like Paul, understood that only through the Bible can a person be **thoroughly equipped for every good work** (2 Tim. 3:17).

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. What evidence do you see that the Bible is inspired (God-breathed)?
2. When did the Holy Spirit use God's Word to teach, rebuke, correct, or train you?
3. How can we, like Wesley, become a people of "one book"?

Exercise LIFE APPLICATION

Mahatma Gandhi once remarked, "You Christians have in your keeping a document with enough dynamite to blow the whole of civilization to bits; to turn society upside down; to bring peace to this war-torn world. But you read it as if it were just good literature, and nothing else." How can we read the Bible so that it truly makes a difference in our lives and in our world?

- Regularly read or listen. You can go through the Bible in one year if you read or listen to it for just fourteen minutes a day.
- Study. Join a group or class. Take a course at a Bible college or online.
- Memorize. Learn a verse a week or a verse a month. Commit a passage to memory. Psalm 119:11 says, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."
- Meditate. Think long and deeply over things God tells you through his Word.
- Pray the Word. Learn to offer God's promises and truths back to him in prayer as you read them.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

3:16 *teaching, rebuking, correcting and training.* Paul used a logical behavioral change sequence that is as effective in bringing about change in the lives of adults as it is in the proper training of children. Change cannot occur if the person does not understand what is right (see Rom. 10:14; Matt. 5:2). Rebuke is necessary and appropriate when the learner heads willfully in the wrong direction—either in attitude or in thinking pattern (see Ps. 119:67, 71, 75). Correction creates checkpoints that help to keep the learner on the right course. And training uses repetition to make righteousness a pattern of life.

3:17 *thoroughly equipped.* Although God is the giver of spiritual and natural gifts, those gifts need practice and training in order to become useful in the body of Christ as it reaches out to the world around it.

EXPLORE **Three**

1. We see evidence that the Bible is inspired in its accuracy, preservation, fulfilled prophecy, and illumination by the Spirit.
2. Calls for a personal response.
3. Let the Bible be the book against which every other book is tested.

EXERCISE **Closing**

Instruct your class members to read this study Scripture individually and silently at least twice. While they read, class members should ask themselves, "What is God's message for me here?" After a few moments of reading and reflection, close with a prayer promising to allow the Scriptures to work in your lives.

Help class members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Sticky Labels" (p. 352) from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4*.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EVALUATE Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share encouragement or words of truth they received from the study.

ENGAGE **Opening**
Put together a five-to-ten statement true-or-false quiz that emphasizes the importance of finishing what we start.

EXAMINE **Background**
At the time he wrote this letter, Paul again faced trial in Rome. After his first Roman imprisonment and trial, Paul was evidently released to enjoy another period of public ministry (although the Acts record ends before the resolution of Paul's first Roman trial). Within the biblical record, we have only the Pastoral Epistles to give us information about Paul's release and subsequent ministry.

Key Verse
I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
—2 Timothy 4:7

Scripture
2 Timothy 4:1–8, 16–18

Lesson Focus
God gives us strength to persevere and guide others as we run the race before us.

Check Out . . .

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4
Unit: 4
Lesson: 10
Activity: Honorably Discharged
Page: 361

Lesson 10 August 4

Faithful to the Finish

Engage Session Overview

Weary in body but strong in the hope of the Lord, Paul ended his letter to Timothy by sharing both challenge and encouragement. The challenge is for us to run the race before us with perseverance and hope. Not only that, but we are to provide guidance to others along the way. At first glance, it would appear that the challenge is too great for us. However, Paul was careful to provide encouragement by recounting his own victorious example, reminding us that God is with us and that wonderful things await those who finish the course victoriously.

Examine Introduction

There was once a man who considered himself a world-class marathoner. The only trouble was that he only had stamina to stay in the race for the first fifty yards. Many people are good beginners, but you aren't a champion marathoner if you can only run the first fifty yards. The same is true in our spiritual lives. It is not enough to be a good beginner; we must also persevere and be a finisher in the race set before us. Faced with this reality, our mind pauses to consider some questions:

- Because this race is so difficult, should we follow the adage, "Every man for himself"?

PERSONAL NOTES

- Is it really possible to run this race and be confident of victory?
- How can we ever finish the course and keep the faith when our path is so strewn with turmoil and opposition?

These are good questions. Fortunately, Paul addressed these questions with some clear and encouraging answers.

ONE: We have a sacred charge to guide others (2 Tim. 4:1–5).

KJV	NIV
1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; **2** Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. **3** For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; **4** And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. **5** But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.	**1** In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: **2** Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. **3** For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. **4** They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. **5** But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Imagine that a deeply respected and honored teacher walks up to you, puts a hand on your shoulder, looks solemnly into your eyes, and says, **In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead . . . I give you this charge** (v. 1). If you can imagine that scenario and your reaction to it, you can begin to imagine what Timothy must have felt when he first read those words. It was obvious from Paul's declaration that this "charge" was very serious. Timothy undoubtedly paid

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXAMINE **ONE:** Sing or read together Charles Wesley's hymn "A Charge to Keep I Have," and discuss the similarities between the tone of the song and these verses in 2 Timothy.

4:1 *presence of God and of Christ Jesus.* This phrase has the import of a solemn and binding statement.

4:1 *who will judge.* When we are surprised or dismayed by evidence of injustice in our world, we have this hope as surety: ultimately God will judge, and justice will have its day (John 5:24–27; Rev. 20:4; Ps.9:8; 82:8; 96:13; Isa. 33:22).

4:1 *the living and the dead.* All will stand before God's judgment seat (see Rev. 14:7; Matt. 12:36; John 5:22; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Pet. 2:4–10).

4:2 *Preach the word.* The word *preach* appears most frequently in the New Testament—first as a way of describing Jesus' mission and ministry (Matt. 4:17; 10:7; 11:1; Mark 1:38; 3:14; 16:15; Luke 4:18, 43). To preach means simply to tell the good news (gospel) that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15).

4:2 *in season and out of season.* While each life has its ebb and flow—its periods of work interspersed with times of rest, the Christian's relationship to Christ can take no vacations. Up-to-the-moment, unbroken fellowship with Christ makes it possible for a Christian to take every opportunity, scheduled or unscheduled, to share the good news of salvation with others.

4:2 *patience and careful instruction.* Paul reinforced the teaching principles he had laid out in chapter 3. While preaching was Paul's first love, he was keenly aware that preaching must be followed up by patient, careful discipling (Acts 2:42; 18:11; 2 John 1:9).

4:3 *great number of teachers . . . itching ears.* The word translated "itching" does not appear anywhere else in Scripture. William Vermillion commented: "Paul uses a superbly ironic metaphor to illustrate the way these unsound people want a teacher who only itches/tickles their ears. The teachings hit the outer ear but never go any deeper" (*Asbury Bible Commentary*).

4:4 *turn their ears away.* Refusal to listen to truth, and the choice to "turn aside to myths" is the essence of heresy. This subject was very much on Paul's mind in the wake of Demas's desertion (see 4:9).

4:5 *keep your head.* Paul did not let hardship (see 1 Cor. 11:23–33) interrupt his commitment to ministry (Phil. 3:14; see also 2 Tim. 4:7). Here he passed this high standard on to Timothy—and to all that follow in Timothy's calling.

4:5 *evangelist . . . ministry.* Again Paul referred to the twofold task of a pastor—to tell the good news and to help those who accept the gospel become established in their Christian life (see notes on 4:2).

EXPLORE One

1. Because Paul mentioned the words separately as he listed our responsibilities, it can be assumed that he had a certain distinction in mind. Perhaps "correction" is called for when an individual strays from the right path innocently or because of immaturity. Such a circumstance would call for a patient, gentle response. On the other hand, if an individual strays willfully, knowingly, and rebelliously, a sharper response—a "rebuke" would be in order. In either case, we are to "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15).

2. Victory is never easy. Reasons to quit can always be found. Champions pay the price of endurance. Dedication to a cause.

close attention to the message that followed. Since God's Word transcends the ages and speaks directly to every reader of every generation, we should also pay close attention to this charge.

Paul immediately made it clear that we have certain responsibilities as we run the race set before us. It would appear that we must do more than simply focus on our own individual progress in this race; we must also focus on providing guidance to others along the way.

In verse 2, we are instructed to **preach the word**. It is the Word that provides clear direction as we navigate the course. We are not at liberty to choose any path that meets our fancy. We must follow, and share with others, the clear direction of God's Word. Any other path will only lead us off course and into harm's way. We are to **be prepared** under any circumstance or situation to **correct** those who innocently stray from the path, **rebuke** those who knowingly and willfully leave the course, and we are to provide encouragement as we go.

Paul acknowledged that there are some who will turn from the only course that leads to victory and follow their own way. They will even enlist **teachers** who will sanction their folly (vv. 3–4). Nevertheless, even in the midst of this confusion, we are to keep our head rather than delegating our thinking and reason to others. We are also to **endure hardship**, which is the defining characteristic of any champion, and we are to keep our focus on evangelism and **ministry** (v. 5). That way, we will not only finish the race, we will finish well—and help others as we go.

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. What is the difference between correcting and rebuking?
2. Why would enduring hardship be considered the "defining characteristic of any champion"?

The charge to persevere in the race and to provide guidance to others as we go is a tall order. Paul was careful to point out, however, that he had run this race before us—and won.

PERSONAL NOTES

TWO: It is possible to finish this race victoriously (2 Tim. 4:6–8).

KJV	NIV
6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.	**6** For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near.
7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:	**7** I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.	**8** Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

When we face a difficult task, there is nothing that can fill our hearts with more confidence than hearing the testimony of someone who has faced the same task and emerged victorious. Paul knew this, of course, and encouraged us in our race by reminding us of his own perseverance and victory.

Imprisoned under Emperor Nero, chained like a criminal (see 2 Tim. 2:9) and with only Luke by his side (4:11), Paul knew his life—like ceremonial wine poured around the altar (see Num. 28:7)—would soon be offered for the cause of Christ (see 2 Tim. 4:6). He was not despondent, however, because he knew that with God's help, coupled with the power of individual choice, he could choose to finish this race as a winner. That is exactly what he chose to do.

How glorious to face death with the same confidence exhibited by Paul. He had not simply been a great starter, he had **finished the race**; he had **kept the faith** (v. 7). He had demonstrated to everyone that finishing this race with your faith and hope intact is possible. Because he did it, we sense that we can too.

Encouraged by his example, we press on for the prize. We persevere, knowing that at the end there awaits a **crown of righteousness**, awarded not only to Paul, **but . . . to all who have longed for his appearing** (v. 8).

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

TWO: Discuss how the possibility of shipwrecking our faith (see 1 Tim. 1:19) does not eliminate the possibility of being confident that we will receive our reward promised in these verses.

4:6 *poured out like a drink offering.* The sin and guilt offerings, which involved animal sacrifice, were completed by the symbolic pouring out of a measured quantity of wine over the offering (see Num. 28:4–7). By using this phrase, Paul—who had long advocated the concept of becoming a living sacrifice (see Rom. 12:1)—indicated that the personal sacrificial offering of his life was nearly complete (see Isa. 53:12).

4:7 *finished . . . kept.* To win a race, two things are essential—starting and finishing. In other letters, Paul went more into detail about how the Christian life compares to athletic competition (see 1 Cor. 9:24–27; Phil. 2:16; 3:14; Col. 2:18; 1 Tim. 4:8; Heb. 12:1).

4:8 *in store for me.* Paul was very goal oriented. His primary goal was to win God's approval—as symbolized by a "crown of righteousness." He was, at the same time, careful to explain that a victor's crown awaits any whose hearts are centered on eternal concerns.

EXPLORE **Two**

1. Calls for a personal response.
2. Calls for a personal response.

EXAMINE **THREE:** Use a chart to contrast and compare verse 17 with Luke 22:31–32; Romans 16:20; and 1 Peter 5:8–9. What images do these passages have in common? What is different about each one? What principles of spiritual warfare do you see in these verses?

4:16 *At my first defense.* These words may refer to the trial at the end of Paul's first imprisonment, but they more likely refer to a more recent initial public hearing (during Paul's second Roman imprisonment). On what basis do we state this? Timothy himself had been with Paul during at least part of his first Roman imprisonment (see Phil. 1:1).

4:16 *no one came to my support.* Paul felt alone. At his hearing, no human companion acted as an advocate for Paul, helping him with his defense.

4:16 *May it not be held against them.* Paul had felt hurt by the lack of support. At the same time, he held no grudge. He asked God to forgive those who could have helped.

4:17 *the Lord stood at my side.* Paul recognized he had not been totally deserted. His Lord had accompanied Paul at that moment, as Jesus always did (see Matt. 28:20).

4:17 *the message might be fully proclaimed.* Jesus had given Paul courage, for even when he was on trial—at least partially for his preaching of a new and potentially illegal religion—he remained steadfastly loyal to Jesus, continuing to proclaim the gospel.

4:17 *I was delivered from the lion's mouth.* Evidence convinces us that Paul would soon face execution, but God had at least spared him facing that sentence without human companionship. (Hopefully Timothy reached him before the end; see 4:21.)

Faithful to the Finish

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. What are some activities or attitudes in your life that help you "keep the faith"?
2. If you suddenly discovered your death was near, would you face that knowledge with the same confidence as Paul? Why or why not?

It is wonderful to imagine our ultimate victory in this race of life. Nevertheless, in quiet moments of reflection, we may discover that doubt and worry enter our mind. Can we really win this race? Can we really persevere until the end? Yes, we really can emerge the victor, because we have help along the way.

THREE: We do not run this race alone (2 Tim. 4:16–18).

KJV	*NIV*
16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.	**16** At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them.
17 Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.	**17** But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth.
18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.	**18** The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul understood that in this race we sometimes face the strong headwinds of opposition. He had been forsaken by everyone in the province of Asia, deserted by Demas, opposed by Alexander the metalworker, and abandoned by all his supporters (see 2 Tim. 1:15; 4:10, 14, 16). He still ran with confidence, however, because, as he put it, **the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength** (v. 17).

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Paul celebrated God's presence in the past, when God had **delivered** him **from the lion's mouth** (v. 17), and Paul joyfully anticipated God's presence in the future when he knew God would **rescue** him **from every evil attack** and would **bring** him **safely to his heavenly kingdom** (v. 18).

We can also run this race with confidence. We remember God's deliverance in the past and we propel ourselves forward in the calm assurance that God precedes us down the path, guiding us as we go. It is not surprising, therefore, that we would want to add our voice with Paul's and praise God by saying, **To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen** (v. 18).

Explore Understanding God's Word

1. How should we respond when we face opposition?
2. What events in your life have convinced you that you do not run this race alone?

If we were left on our own to run the race before us, we would not win. How wonderful that God runs with us and gives us strength. Because of him, we can not only begin the race, but also finish it; we can not only run the race, but also run it well. That is now the challenge before us. We must run. We must finish the course. For it is in the finishing that God receives true glory—and it is in finishing that we gain the prize.

Exercise Life Application

With God's help, you can run the race before you. God calls you to persevere and be a finisher. He also calls you to provide help and guidance to others along the way. As you cinch up your spiritual running shoes and set out, consider the following suggestions:

- Reflect on your journey. If you are going to endure, you need to rid yourself of any "weights" that pose a threat to your perseverance. Write down any unconfessed sins, debilitating worries, or unresolved problems that hinder your progress. Then take each one to God for guidance regarding the best way to handle them. You may want to

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TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE Three

1. When we face opposition we should follow Paul's example: he prayed for his enemies and reaffirmed his victory in the Lord.
2. Calls for a personal response.

EXERCISE Closing

Help your class members discuss applications for this lesson by asking each one to complete one of these sentences: "If I could take only one thing from this Bible study . . . "; or, "If I took this lesson seriously, I would . . . "; or, "I believe God wants me to . . . "

Help class members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Finders Keepers" (p. 361) from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4*.

enlist the wise counsel of experienced Christians as you plan strategies in dealing with these obstacles.

- Do you or the class know any "weary runners"? We must encourage when we can (see 2 Tim. 4:2). Consider specific ways you or the class can help someone who needs your loving encouragement. Make a plan and take action in the days ahead.
- Are you facing opposition? Read 2 Timothy 4:16–18 and Matthew 5:11–12, 43–47. Make a covenant with God that you will pray for your enemy every day this week. If you do, you will soon discover the power and peace of love.

PERSONAL NOTES

Key Verse
He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.
—Titus 1:9

Scripture
Titus 1:1–5, 10–16

Lesson Focus
Working with defiant people requires decisiveness.

Check Out . . .

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Lesson 11 August 11

Serving Christ among Difficult People

Engage SESSION OVERVIEW

A leader must be a problem solver. Part of a leader's job description, from time to time, is to straighten things out. This is always more complicated when the problems involve rebellious people. By their very nature, rebellious people are defiant and unruly. It takes wisdom and decisive action to deal with such persons and such problems.

Examine INTRODUCTION

At first glance, upon reading Paul's instructions to Titus on the island of Crete, we might easily think, "This passage does not apply to me. It was written to Titus, who had responsibility for appointing pastors and straightening out difficult problems. That's the preacher's job or the district superintendent's responsibility. It has nothing to do with me." If we take such an attitude, we will miss some excellent insight into human behavior in this passage. We will also miss the opportunity to consider how we may be part of the solution instead of part of the problem.

What are some ways people often try to duck responsibility for what they think is not their problem?

As we study this passage, we will want to consider how we as laypersons can support our leaders and how we may have a positive influence on those who are causing trouble.

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EVALUATE Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share encouragement or words of truth they received from the study.

ENGAGE **Opening**
Present an overview of the book of Titus by answering the following questions: Who wrote it? Who was the original recipient? Where was the author when he wrote? Where was the original recipient? When was it written? Why was it written?

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXAMINE ONE: Compare Paul's use of apostolic authority in addressing Titus in this passage with his words in 2 Corinthians 10:1–11. Based on these passages, what is the purpose of authority in the church? Who carries the bulk of spiritual authority and responsibility in your local congregation? How do the members of your church family relate to them?

1:1 *servant of God.* The Greek word behind *servant* could equally well be translated "slave," as it is in 2:9. In this letter, Paul frequently substituted the word *God* in places where he more frequently used *Jesus*. (For example, see 1:3; 2:10; and 3:4; where he used "God our Savior.") Perhaps this language communicated more strongly to Titus or the people among whom he ministered.

1:1 *to further the faith of God's elect.* Paul worked for the benefit of God's people, but under the direction of God himself. The phrase "God's elect" refers to those whom God had chosen to be his children. Whom had God chosen? God invites all people to salvation, but allows each person the opportunity to accept or reject that call.

1:1 *knowledge of the truth.* Paul wished to offer not mere head knowledge, but knowledge that comes from experience; likewise, not mere facts of truth, but interaction with the One who is the truth. Only experiential knowledge of God can produce godliness. Awareness of facts does not lead the knowing person to rest in the hope God provides (see 1:2).

1:2 *hope.* Biblical hope involves much more than mere wishing; the hope Paul spoke of gives certainty.

1:2 *God . . . does not lie.* In contrast, the people of Crete among whom Titus ministered were often seen as liars (see 1:12). And Jesus described Satan as "the father of lies" (John 8:44).

1:2 *promised before the beginning of time.* God had originally planned for his people to enjoy eternal life. When their choice of sin and death contradicted his plan, he had another provision already in mind.

1:3 *his appointed season.* When the appropriate circumstances were in place, God sent his Word (see Gal. 4:4). (If you are curious about some of the circumstances that made the first century a good time for God to send his Son, check out the opening chapters of a church history textbook, such as Bruce Shelley's *Church History in Plain Language*.) God revealed his Word. His Word included both his eternal plan and the expression of that plan in the Word made flesh (see John 1:14).

1:3 *the preaching.* This word could refer to the preaching Paul had heard, the preaching he gave to others, and/or to the content of preaching—the gospel.

Serving Christ among Difficult People

ONE: Leaders must try to straighten out things (Titus 1:1–5).

KJV	NIV
1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;	**1** Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—
2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;	**2** in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,
3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;	**3** and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,
4 To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.	**4** To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.
5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:	**5** The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.

Paul and Titus had apparently been together on Crete, an island in the Mediterranean Sea, southeast of present-day Greece, at some previous time. When Paul wrote, **I left you in Crete** (v. 5), we may surmise he was called away to deal with issues in another place. Now he was writing to Titus to remind the younger man why he was left there. Probably the most important reason Paul left Titus was so that he could **appoint elders in every town** (v. 5) where there was a church.

Today churches use a variety of methods for choosing their leaders. Some appoint. Others elect. Still others nominate before electing. In some churches, the entire congregation votes on its leaders. In others a board or a committee may choose some or all of the leaders. Whatever the process, Paul listed the qualifications for such leaders in verses 6–9, which is worthy of a study of its own.

However, for today, we want to look at the authority with which Paul instructed Titus to take up his tasks on Crete. Paul

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referred to himself as a **servant of God** and wrote as **an apostle of Jesus Christ** (v. 1). Why the twofold reference, one as a humble servant and the other carrying the clout of an apostle?

Titus was Paul's friend and protégé. As such, they were fellow servants. However, the magnitude of the problems Titus faced on Crete required Paul to throw the full weight of his apostleship behind his instructions. Thus when Titus passed them on to the churches on the island, he had apostolic authority behind him.

Paul's motivation was not simply to flaunt his authority in this letter. Instead he exercised his authority in order to strengthen **the faith of God's elect** (v. 1). He wanted to increase their **knowledge of the truth**. He wanted to instill the bright **hope of eternal life** (v. 2) and to remind them that God is absolutely faithful; he **does not lie**. God's plan for us is no afterthought. He had our spiritual salvation and development in mind **before the beginning of time** (v. 2), but in his providence, he revealed the truth **at his appointed season** (v. 3). In other words, "When the time was ripe, he went public with his truth" (v. 3 MSG).

Paul did not take his apostolic responsibility lightly. After all, his commission to preach the gospel, he told Titus, was **entrusted to** him **by the command of God our Savior** (v. 3).

The apostle felt great affection for the young man. He called him his **true son** (v. 4), which may indicate that Titus was converted under Paul's ministry. Although Paul had authority over Titus, and although Paul was a Jew and Titus was a Greek, they were equal in Christ (see Gal. 3:28), because they had a **common faith** (Titus 1:4).

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. In essence, Paul gave his credentials in verses 1–3. What are your credentials for sharing your faith with others?
2. As a Christian, with whom do you have a parent-child relationship? A brother-sister relationship?

Realizing who we are in Christ helps prepare us to deal with difficult problems.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

1:4 *Titus.* Titus was a spiritual son of Paul, who served as a faithful minister of the gospel. Interestingly, the name of Titus does appear in Acts, although the name appears with some regularity in Paul's Epistles. Titus appeared with Paul in Jerusalem, even before Paul's first missionary journey (Gal. 2:1, 3), so Titus came to faith perhaps through Paul's (then Saul) earliest ministry in Antioch. In Galatians 1:3, Paul mentioned that no one compelled Titus to be circumcised; this indicates that he was from a Gentile background. Titus apparently worked with Paul in Ephesus because, from that city, Paul sent him as a representative to the Corinthian church (2 Cor.; 7:5–15; 8:6, 16–24). After Paul's first Roman imprisonment, Paul and Titus worked together on Crete before Paul moved on (Titus 1:5). When Paul wrote this letter he was still free, because he asked Titus to join him in Nicopolis, a city in western Greece (3:12).

1:5 *put in order what was left unfinished.* It appears that Paul and Titus had jointly preached on the island of Crete, but Paul felt he needed to move on before churches had been firmly established. Here Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders. (See 1:8–9 for the qualifications of these persons who could give leadership and stability to local groups of Christians.)

EXPLORE One

1. A believer's credentials would be his or her own personal relationship with Christ. Our own testimony is usually our most powerful tool. In addition, the more we know God's Word, the better equipped we are to share our faith.

2. Calls for a personal response. It is ideal if every Christian is discipling others, or being discipled, or both. In addition, in the family of God we have many brothers and sisters in Christ. Hopefully, many of them are close comrades in the faith.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXAMINE **TWO:** Recruit a student to present a brief report on Epimenides, the prophet from Crete.

1:10 *many rebellious people.* Paul warned Timothy against the negative influence of those who openly rejected faith in Jesus Christ. Many of these opponents were Jews (the circumcision group), who saw Christian faith as a heretical violation of their Scriptures (the Old Testament). These persons spoke lies (in contrast to God, who speaks truth; 1:2). Their words brought harm rather than the health of "sound doctrine" (2:1).

1:12 *one of Crete's own prophets.* The quotation from verse 12 originally came from a sixth-century Cretan poet called Epimenides. This man had spoken some predictions that later were fulfilled; thus many Cretans viewed him as a prophet. Were Epimenides' generalizations true? Paul thought so (1:13)! Also, the Greek language included a verb: "to cretanize." This word meant "to lie; to speak a falsehood."

1:15 *To the pure, all things are pure.* Everything God made is good. Therefore God's people can wisely enjoy everything God made. At the same time, everything God made can be corrupted and abused. To those who reject God's ways, any component of life and the world can be a means to disobedience (see 1 Tim. 1:3–5).

1:16 *They claim to know God.* People can pretend (perhaps deceiving even themselves) that they belong to God. But others observing their lives can, over time, discern who truly follows God. For those who deceive others with what they know to be false, Paul could hardly come up with strong enough words to describe them: "detestable . . . and unfit for doing anything good."

Serving Christ among Difficult People

TWO: Rebellious people tend to rebel (Titus 1:10, 12, 15, 16).

KJV	NIV
10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision:	**10** For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group.
12 One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, the Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.	**12** One of Crete's own prophets has said it: "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."
15 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.	**15** To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.
16 They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.	**16** They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

If appointing leaders was the most important task Paul left for Titus to do, a case could be made for the idea that the most urgent need was dealing with the rebellious troublemakers on the island.

To get an accurate picture of this group, notice how Paul described them. When he said they were **rebellious** (v. 10), he meant they were disobedient, like insubordinate soldiers, refusing to accept orders. They were **full of meaningless talk and deception**. Shallow in their thinking and speaking, they had the cunning ability to mislead and throw people off course. Further, they were **of the circumcision group**, which means they believed that to be a true follower of Christ one must first be circumcised and practice the Jewish ceremonial law.

Besides all this, Paul portrayed them as basically dishonest in their character. One of Crete's own prophets, Epimenides, who lived in the sixth century before Christ, described the inhabitants of this island as **liars, evil brutes,** and **lazy gluttons** (v. 12). Paul, having witnessed the Cretans' attitudes and behavior firsthand, agreed with the ancient prophet!

As if this weren't enough, Paul declared **both their minds and consciences are corrupted** (v. 15). When a person's mind is

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thoroughly tainted with evil, to that person **nothing is pure**. He easily gravitates toward what is dirty, wicked, and unwholesome. On the other hand, the person whose mind is pure tends to find what is good and wholesome.

Added to the troublemakers' other characteristics was a hypocritical spirit. Although they claimed **to know God** (v. 16), Paul observed, **by their actions they deny him**. He concluded they were **detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good**. Like a counterfeit coin or a cowardly soldier who runs away from battle, these rebellious people were unfit for fulfilling their calling.

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. If you found yourself in a church with numerous persons like those Paul described, what would your reaction be? Would you cut and run or stay and pray?
2. How do you personally compare (or contrast) with the persons Paul described in verses 10–16?

Leaders who find themselves confronted with such thorny problems need wisdom from God to know how to deal with them.

THREE: Decisiveness is needed to deal with corruption (Titus 1:11, 13–14).

KJV	*NIV*
11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. **13** This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; **14** Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.	**11** They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. **13** This saying is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith **14** and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE Two

1. Calls for a personal response. It takes courage to stay and pray. Unless some courageous Christians are willing to do this, the church falls prey to the worst influences.

2. Calls for a personal response. Ideally, there will be a contrast. It is a good point for self-reflection and prayer.

EXAMINE THREE: Use a topical or reference Bible to guide your class to uncover the New Testament principles of dealing with divisive and rebellious church members. Discuss how they would feel if your church practiced these principles.

1:11 *They must be silenced.* Titus had no power to hinder public speech, but he could prevent the deceivers from speaking within church meetings. Titus could also warn the believers against their falsehoods (see 1:13–14).

1:11 *whole households.* Ancient households often included extended family members and slaves.

1:11 *dishonest gain.* Perhaps Jewish leaders feared loss of synagogue income (when former members joined Christian communities), some of which ended up in their pockets (see 1 Tim. 6:3–10).

1:13 *rebuke them sharply.* When Christians wavered between Christ and their previous way of life, Titus, for their own benefit, could help bring them back to the truth.

1:14 *Jewish myths.* Wise Christians never rejected the Jewish Scriptures (appropriately interpreted), but gave little attention to nonbiblical fictional stories that had grown up within the Jewish community.

EXPLORE Three

1. Laypersons must be careful not to usurp the pastor's role, since he is the God-anointed and church-ordained leader. However, laypersons can be great partners of the pastor to pray and work toward healing and health in the congregation. Why not ask the pastor what you can do to help?

2. This is presupposing a rebellious person would be willing to talk. If so, a kind but firm emphasis on the Word, indicating how a Christian is supposed to act and speak, would be advisable. Emphasizing unity in the church and submission to authority are also important principles to stress (see 2 Tim. 2:23–26; Eph. 4:1–6; Col. 3:14; Heb. 13:17).

Serving Christ among Difficult People

How could people in the church miss the mark so much? Instead of pursuing the truth out of a love for God and others, they were **teaching things they ought not to teach . . . for the sake of dishonest gain** (v. 11). We're not sure just how they were making money through their teaching, but we do know their motive was materialistic.

Without correction, rebellious people could destroy the church. Paul indicated it was imperative that they **be silenced**. By their wrong **teaching**, they were **disrupting whole households**.

How does one silence another adult who insists on speaking? The original language indicates the use of a muzzle, as one might suppress a barking dog. Without resorting to an actual muzzle or to violence, the option is to counter the false teaching with the truth.

Another alternative is to **rebuke them sharply** (v. 13). The goal is not just to quiet them, but to turn them away from error, to deliver them from the Evil One, and ultimately to save their souls. Paul's concern was to help them become **sound in the faith**, to help them abandon **Jewish myths** (v. 14), which were apparently speculations based on the Old Testament, and to free them from the influence of **those who reject the truth**.

Explore Understanding God's Word

1. By appointing leaders in every congregation, Titus established an authority structure to deal with problem people. However, is it only the pastor who is to deal with such people? What can laypersons do to help?
2. Guided by the Holy Spirit, if you could sit down with a rebellious person such as those described here, what would you say?

When faced with difficult problems in a church, the easiest thing to do is to look for a different church. However, what if God asks you to stay and help find a solution?

PERSONAL NOTES

Exercise LIFE APPLICATION

Most of us can hardly imagine being part of a church where defiant people are as prominent as they were in Crete. However, sometimes bitter, rebellious people do exert undue influence in a congregation. Do you know of such a church? Set aside some time this week to pray for that church, its pastor, and its people. If you don't know of such a church, pray for your own church that God will keep it from such evil influences. While you're at it, ask yourself some searching questions this week in the form of prayers:

- Lord, am I a "meaningless talker," as some of these people were (v. 10)? If so, please help my conversation contain more substance and grace.
- Lord, the Cretans had a reputation of being "liars, evil brutes" and "lazy gluttons" (v. 12). Please help me develop a reputation of being truthful, pure, and industrious.
- Lord, is my heart pure (v. 15)? Please show me any impurities so that I may confess them and be cleansed.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXERCISE **Closing**
Read the lesson focus aloud for your class members and ask them to ponder it silently for two minutes. Close with prayer for your church to be free of rebellious people and filled with honest, pure, and hardworking Christians.

Help class members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Class Church" (p. 366) from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4*.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EVALUATE Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share encouragement or words of truth they received from the study.

ENGAGE **Opening**
Today's lesson contains the statement, "Paul was asking Titus to conduct something like a "school of Christian living." Discuss what ministries or programs in your church function as a "school of Christian living."

Key Verse
You . . . must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. . . . It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

—Titus 2:1, 12

Scripture
Titus 2:1–15

Lesson Focus
Teaching sound doctrine results in changed lives.

Check Out . . .

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4
Unit: 4
Lesson: 12
Activity: Trust Levels
Page: 375

Lesson 12 August 18

Teaching and Living Sound Doctrine

Engage SESSION OVERVIEW

Salvation is a wonderful, transforming experience deep within one's inner being. But there is a learning process that follows. Old habits, worldly ways, wrong thinking, and self-centered attitudes may hang on or reappear. The path of faith opens up new horizons to be explored and a challenging call to godliness. What godliness looks like is not automatically absorbed. Teaching, mentoring, and modeling are critical.

Examine INTRODUCTION

Initial evangelism and church planting had already begun on the island of Crete.

The needed emphasis at this stage was discipleship and leadership development. Paul was asking Titus to conduct something like a "school of Christian living." It was essential that the believers be grounded in sound doctrine. Head knowledge was not enough. The truth needed to be embraced in their hearts and lived out each day. Paganism and false teaching were all around, but Paul still expected godliness; he was confident in God's transforming power and grace.

PERSONAL NOTES

Teaching and Living Sound Doctrine

ONE: Christian teaching includes both belief and behavior (Titus 2:1–6).

KJV	NIV
1 But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: **2** That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. **3** The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; **4** That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, **5** To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. **6** Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.	**1** You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. **2** Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. **3** Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. **4** Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, **5** to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. **6** Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled.

Paul had an important mission for Titus to fulfill in Crete, and a key part of it would be accomplished through teaching. He made it very emphatic: **You . . . must teach** (v. 1). It would require patient explanation and response to questions. It was not a simple process but critical to the health and strength of the church. The subject of the teaching was **sound doctrine**, which included beliefs or theology but not just this body of truth. There was a need for practical training that was **appropriate to** Christian doctrine but was focused more on application, attitude, and conduct.

What follows is a list of various groups of people with specific teaching for each. While there must have been reasons for this, we should probably not assume that the items mentioned would apply exclusively to the group under which they were listed. Some themes are repeated under different groups. Words such as **likewise** (v. 3) and **similarly** (v. 6) would seem to imply a broader application.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXAMINE **ONE:** Divide your class into two groups. Ask the first group to look through the Bible to find four or five passages that indicate the importance of correct doctrine. Ask the second group to find four or five passages that point out the importance of right behavior. After a few minutes of interaction and study, have each group report their findings to the whole class.

2:1 *sound doctrine.* Paul repeated this phrase frequently throughout the Pastoral Epistles. It demonstrates the fact that as the church spread, so also did false teaching. Paul wished Titus to be a partial solution to the heresy problem, not a force contributing to it. The word *sound* speaks of that which produces wholeness. Contrast this entire verse with 1:11, which refers to those who "[teach] . . . things they ought not to teach."

2:2 *Teach.* Note that teaching of doctrine (v. 1) and lifestyle issues (vv. 2–10) go hand in hand.

2:2 *the older men.* Christians can view these next verses in at least two ways. Perhaps they offer distinctive traits for each of several groups. Or, more likely, Paul intended the great majority of the instructions to apply to the entire church. Can you picture some young man saying that Paul intended temperance for only older men? For further confirmation of this conclusion, note that Paul began subsequent paragraphs with "likewise" and "similarly" (vv. 3, 6).

2:2 *temperate.* Note both 1:7 and 2:3, which also speak against drunkenness.

2:2 *worthy of respect.* Within this ancient culture, one received respect merely for being an older person. Paul wanted older Christians not only to receive respect, but to live in a manner worthy of it.

2:2 *self-controlled.* This includes not giving in to sudden, foolish decisions.

2:2 *in faith, in love and in endurance.* Paul, in 1 Corinthians 13:13, spoke of faith, hope, and love. Perhaps he was thinking similar thoughts here, for one who has hope in God is empowered to endure.

2:3 *reverent.* Live in a way that reflects God's holiness.

2:3 *slanderers.* Those who do not gain their self-worth from God's love often feel the need to tear others down. Through this harmful behavior, slanderers hope to make themselves look better.

2:3 *teach what is good.* If Christian leaders teach what is sound and good, their followers are more likely to do so.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

2:4 *urge the younger women.* As in 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul pointed out a chain of wholesome teaching. In his letter, Paul was teaching Titus. He instructed Titus to teach well. The older women who heard their pastor could then pass along their wisdom to the church's younger women.

2:4 *to love their husbands.* Just as ideal husbands love their wives (Eph. 5:25), so wives respond in kind.

2:5 *to be busy at home.* Should believers see these as timeless words, instructing young women not to work outside of the home? Perhaps not. One could draw from them the principle that all Christians should faithfully fulfill the worthy roles they have taken on.

2:5 *to be subject to their husbands.* In the first century world in which Paul lived, this reflected the typical role of a wife. Part of Paul's concern was likely for the reputation of the gospel. If Christian women did not behave in a loving and respectful way, others might have occasion to "malign the word of God." If husband and wife truly love each other, then they will willingly submit to each other. (see Eph. 5:21).

2:5 *so that no one will malign the word of God.* Christians who follow the example of their Lord attract people to faith. Christians whose lives are inconsistent with Christian teachings hinder people from knowing Jesus.

2:6 *self-controlled.* At the time Titus received this letter, he was ministering on the island of Crete (1:5). Cretans apparently were known for lack of self-control (1:12). This local weakness likely motivated Paul to highlight the need for personal restraint (2:2, 5–6, 12).

EXPLORE One

1. It was directed to one who had a specific teaching assignment, but could be applied to anyone who influences another spiritually.

2. Some informal teaching settings include parenting, mentoring, counseling, sharing our faith, encouraging friends, etc.

Teaching and Living Sound Doctrine

The first group mentioned was **older men** (v. 2) who had an influential leadership style. They were to be **temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled**. Their age alone was not enough to command respect. If their lives were out of control, it was detrimental to the family, the church, and the community. If they sought the power of God's Holy Spirit to live holy lives, they would earn respect and stand out from the wickedness around them.

The emphasis on being **sound in faith, in love and in endurance** (v. 2) is similar to the faith, hope, and love Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians 13. Endurance is not the same as hope, but there is a connection. The hope we cling to helps us endure the trials we face.

Older women (Titus 2:3) were to be instructed on being **reverent**. This would include proper respect and fear of a holy God and treating people in a way that was pleasing to God. They were not to be **slanderers** who got together and tore others down, **or addicted to much wine**, causing loss of restraint and good judgment. If they would **teach what is good,** they would build others up in the faith. It is interesting that the training for **younger women** (v. 4) was to be done by older women and not Titus. They were to get their own lives in order first, **then they can urge** other to do the right things. By being **self-controlled and pure** (v. 5), younger women would be shining examples of God's grace. It would affect their attitude, home life, and relationships. The section on women concludes with the stated purpose **that no one will malign the word of God** (v. 5). The concern was that there would not be anything going on that would give Christianity a bad name or give grounds for attacks on the credibility of believers.

The only need specifically mentioned for **young men** is that they **be self-controlled** (v. 6), a recurring theme that covers a lot. The teaching was to be in a manner that would **encourage** the person and not in a way that would cause a feeling of defeat or discouragement.

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. Does this section apply today only to volunteer or professional teachers who have a specific assignment to teach, or should it be seen in a broader sense?
2. What are some of the more informal settings or relationships in which teaching occurs?

PERSONAL NOTES

Teaching and Living Sound Doctrine

What we believe and how we live are not separate issues, and any contradiction between the two creates confusion and could be a hindrance to others.

TWO: How the teacher lives adds credibility to the teaching (Titus 2:7–10).

KJV	NIV
7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,	**7** In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness
8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.	**8** and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.
9 Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again;	**9** Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them,
10 Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.	**10** and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

Paul instructed Titus not only to tell people how to live but to **set them an example** (v. 7) and demonstrate godly living. There was no aspect of life that was excluded. His example would be that of **doing what is good**, which seems rather general and unexplained. It must have included qualities that both believers and unbelievers would recognize as right, proper, and commendable. His teaching was to be backed up with **integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech** (vv. 7–8), or it would be a failure. Titus had to be completely honest and never bluff his way along. He could not approach the assignment in a lighthearted, frivolous way. The future of the gospel on this island was at stake. His presentation and argument demanded his very best.

The life of holiness would be a great contrast to what was common in Crete. Some noticed and wondered, while others actively opposed Titus and his teaching. He needed to be careful

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXAMINE **TWO:** Discuss the various reasons why we find it difficult to listen to authority figures who say one thing and do another.

2:7 *set them an example.* Paul wished Titus to model Christlikeness for other young men, but also for the entire church and community.

2:7 *integrity.* Paul urged consistency between Titus' actions (and motivations behind them) with what he taught.

2:7 *seriousness.* Paul was not forbidding humor; he was reminding Titus that he had little time to waste with flippancy.

2:8 *that those who oppose you may be ashamed.* Christians do not behave well merely to impress nonbelievers. But the holy fruit they bear does help others see the value of what they teach.

2:9 *Teach slaves to be subject.* These verses do not condone slavery. Within the first-century context, Paul hoped the behavior of slaves would help their masters come to faith—so that in every way they would make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. Paul may have wished the Christians would free their believing slaves; the letter to Philemon hints at this. But within that culture, Christian slaves, feeling elevated to a position as children of God, might have been tempted to "free themselves," to feel less need to work for their masters. Paul warned against this temptation.

2:10 *God our Savior.* Do these words hint at the divinity of Jesus? Or do they show that the Father was involved in redemption? Perhaps both!

EXPLORE Two

1. We can give people the right impression by making our Christian walk consistent.
2. Calls for a personal response. Some of the qualities mentioned in Titus will likely be included in those that are attractive.
3. Calls for a personal response.

EXAMINE THREE: Paul referred to two different appearances in these verses. To which historical or future events was he referring? How are they connected? How do they help us to live?

2:11 *the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.* With these words, Paul summarized the value of consistent Christian living. God offers grace to all people. The words and lives of those who have experienced that grace should help bring others to salvation.

2:12 *It teaches us.* Note the summary contrasts in this verse. Avoid ungodliness—live godly lives. Avoid worldly passions—live self-controlled lives.

how he lived so these opponents would **be ashamed because they** would **have nothing bad to say** (v. 8). The critics could not be silenced, but they would not have any valid "ammunition."

Paul next wrote about **slaves** (v. 9), who were part of the households and society of that day. Those who were believers could add credibility to the faith by their obedience to their masters and by going even further **to try to please them**. There must have been slaves who did not show respect and would **talk back** or **steal from them** (v. 10). Christian slaves would be different. By showing **that they** could **be fully trusted**, there would be a positive impact on their masters. This would make the teaching **attractive**, and masters and their households would be drawn to the Savior.

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. How can we be certain that we give people the right impression about Christianity?
2. What qualities did you observe in the person who influenced you the most, or in believers in general, that attracted you to the Christian faith?
3. If you are aware of any area in your life in which your conduct has not been consistent with your faith, what will you do about it?

Our profession and proclamation of Christianity opens our lives up to scrutiny. That can be positive or negative, depending on our carefulness, spiritual depth, and reliance on God.

THREE: Godly living has a present and an eternal purpose (Titus 2:11–15).

KJV	*NIV*
11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,	**11** For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.
12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;	**12** It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

PERSONAL NOTES

KJV	NIV
13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; **14** Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. **15** These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.	**13** while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, **14** who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. **15** These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

Paul very strongly declared that **the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people** (v. 11). This did not mean that all had heard and no further proclamation or missionary effort was needed. It pointed to the coming of Jesus into this world as a living, visual manifestation of God's grace. This was not something we deserved, but a Savior was desperately needed. Salvation was now possible and provided through putting one's trust in Christ.

The grace of God also provides teaching that guides believers in daily living and making choices. His grace **teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions** (v. 12). The work of God, the Holy Spirit, and the power of his written Word are certainly implied here. A human instrument may or may not play a part in the process. But just saying no was not the whole story. There was a need to say yes to some very positive qualities. Being **self-controlled** was highlighted as in earlier verses. Paul made it clear that godly living and holiness was for **this present age**, meaning the people of that day in that place. We understand it is intended for every age and every environment.

Holiness and godliness bring an improved quality of life and make our witness believable and effective. But verses 12-13 show that God's ultimate purpose for us is yet in the future. Paul described it as **the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ** (v. 13). God has big plans to bring us to final redemption. He wants to **purify for himself a people** (v. 14) and prepare us for that day. This inner work is not to be dreaded. We can embrace the Lord and all he has for us. Recognizing the

PERSONAL NOTES

EXPLORE **Three**

1. There is much about our society that is pagan and sometimes even beastly. Only prayer and living examples of godliness can make a positive difference.

2. Calls for a personal response. Refer to verse 14.

EXERCISE **Closing**

Give your class members a lump of modeling clay, a piece of paper, a foam cup, or anything they can shape with their hands. Ask them to make something with it that illustrates the significant appearances in today's Bible passage (see vv. 11 and 13).

Help class members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "If I Knew Then . . ." (p. 375) from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4*.

wonderful day that is coming, the believer should be **eager to do what is good** in the days we have to serve him on earth.

Paul concluded by tying it all together as the **things you should teach** (v. 15). This was the emphasis of the entire chapter. He also summarized or reviewed the manner in which the teaching should occur. There was to be a balance: **encourage and rebuke**. Paul gave Titus full authority for the task ahead and his teaching and godly example would make an eternal difference.

Explore Understanding God's Word

1. In what ways would life in Crete be similar to or different from life in our society?
2. How eager are you to do what is good and live in a way that pleases God?

Someday the Lord Jesus will present us to God as his people—his glorious church. He has provided the grace that will teach us how to faithfully follow him to that glorious day.

Exercise Life Application

There is an ongoing passing of the torch in the Christian race. It is important to realize that much of the teaching or modeling we do is not a conscious choice or even part of our awareness. Sometimes we are surprised by comments later in life that show how someone was watching.

- As you think about people who influenced your relationship to the Lord, think about your own personal influence on others.
- Take time to do an inventory of your own personal influence.
- Make a list of those you are or may be teaching by word or example.
- Ask the Lord to show you if there is anything about your conduct that could push someone away from Christianity rather than attract them to the Lord.

Wherever we are in our spiritual walk, God is calling us all to holiness.

PERSONAL NOTES

Key Verse
This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

—Titus 3:8

Scripture
Titus 3:1–15

Lesson Focus
Christians are called to devote themselves to doing what is good.

Check Out . . .

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4
Unit: 4
Lesson: 13
Activity: Vocational Assessment
Page: 380

Lesson 13 August 25

Communicating God's Grace through Deeds

Engage | Session Overview

The church in Crete confronted a challenging society. Yet, in that situation, God reached some of the people with his grace and transformed them into born-again Christians. Paul, through Titus, was able to help those believers deal with their situations and be powerful influences in their community. One of the strong admonitions Paul gave them was an encouragement to do what is good even in their society.

Examine | Introduction

Christians are citizens of two worlds. One is earthly, filled with duties, responsibilities, work, and a lot more. The other is heavenly, promised but not yet realized. We live now in an earthly world and must fulfill our obligations to that world even as we anticipate the world yet to come. It is easy to become imbalanced as we attempt to relate to both worlds. With an imbalance either way, we will not be the kind of believer God intended us to become. Today's study will help us see how God intended for us to fulfill our earthly responsibilities while keeping a clear focus on eternity.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EVALUATE Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share encouragement or words of truth they received from the study.

ENGAGE **Opening**
Review the lessons from Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus by making a list of statements with which the group can agree or disagree.

EXAMINE **ONE:** Compare these verses with Daniel 2:20–21; Mark 12:13–17; and Romans 13:1–7. Who establishes kings and governments? What is the purpose of government? What principles for relating to the government are stated or implied in these passages? What would happen to our statements about governmental authorities if we practiced these principles?

3:1 *Remind the people.* People need reminders. Peter said he wrote both of his letters "as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking" (2 Pet. 3:1). Even people who know what to do need to be reminded to do it.

3:1 *obedient . . . whatever is good.* Kent commented: "Christians must not let the sinful personal lives of rulers influence their submission. Governmental authority must be recognized as God-given (see Rom. 13). Submission will be made more palatable if Christians remember to pray for rulers (see 1 Tim. 2:2). Of course [the principle of obedience] is not absolute. We are not to obey in cases that are morally wrong (see Acts 5:29). Christians should quietly disobey and be obedient to the consequences" (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 230).

3:2 *slander.* Slander is malicious gossip—whether based on truth or falsehood—spoken with the intent to injure (see Ps. 15:3; James 3:6–9).

3:2 *peaceable and considerate . . . gentle toward everyone.* Getting along with others has always been a problem—even within the Christian church. Several New Testament writers addressed the problem, but none more forcibly than James. Like Paul, he traced dissension to its roots—pride (see James 4:1–10).

Communicating God's Grace through Deeds

ONE: Christians have earthly responsibilities to all people (Titus 3:1–2).

KJV	NIV
1 Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,	**1** Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good,
2 To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.	**2** to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.

We have heard that no man is an island, but all too often that truth is forgotten. It is evident that human beings have some major responsibilities toward one another. As Christians, those responsibilities become even more significant because they impact our influence for Christ. Paul reminded Titus of some significant matters.

Paul began in this chapter by urging Titus to remind the people to be subject **to rulers and authorities** (v. 1). Government begins with God and is channeled to us in a variety of ways. Whatever type of government we live under, it is likely that someone exercises authority over us. Paul recognized the legitimacy of government and encouraged believers to be submissive to rightful authority. Only when authority conflicts with biblical principles are we encouraged to resist it. The admonitions in these verses are brief, but direct. They are both positive and negative. In various ways, they challenge human nature, yet it is easy to see that our lives will indeed be more enjoyable if we heed them. Obedience challenges self-will and the human drive to do as one pleases. But being **obedient** to those in authority can result in peace, harmony, and good will.

A major directive in these verses stems from our attitude and motivation. Being **ready to do whatever is good** (v. 1) suggests an attitude that leads to good deeds. Without the right attitude, right results will be missing. Paul was writing to believers and in doing so was encouraging an eagerness to do good at every opportunity. Believers are to be a part of the solution and that should be our intent at all times.

Slander (v. 2) may be defined as a lie intended to be harmful to another person. It can occur in so many ways. Reputations have been destroyed because individuals failed to take Paul's counsel

PERSONAL NOTES

seriously. Resisting the impulse either to initiate or to propagate such unwholesome language is a Christlike choice. Being **peaceable**, **considerate**, and **gentle toward everyone** (v. 2) is indeed the kind of Christian God wants his followers to be. Such persons impact their societies for right in greater measure than those who are contentious and arrogant. They may not make as much noise, but the final product will be far more pleasing.

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. What is the right way to effect change when those in authority are unworthy of their position?
2. How do we develop an attitude for doing good?
3. What kind of persons do you know or remember who exerted great influence for Christ?

TWO: Christians are saved for more than a heavenly purpose (Titus 3:3–11).

KJV	*NIV*
3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.	**3** At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.
4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,	**4** But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared,
5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;	**5** he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,
6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;	**6** whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,
7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.	**7** so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE One

1. We can make changes by our votes, letters, phone calls, email messages, etc.
2. By asking God to give us the right attitude. By doing good and discovering the good feelings that come from it.
3. Calls for a personal response.

EXAMINE TWO: Jesus said, "By their fruit you will recognize them [false prophets]" (Matt. 7:15–20). What kind of fruit or actions will help us spot a divisive person?

3:3 *were . . . enslaved.* Paul pinpointed "passions and pleasures" as enslaving entities. The search for fulfillment through such mortal emotions and "needs" only results in the opposite—"malice and envy," being "hated and hating." In keeping with Satan's original lie (see Gen. 3:5), sin makes a lot of glowing promises that lead only to disillusionment and death (see Prov. 16:25).

3:4–5 *kindness and love . . . mercy.* God's kindness and love are harder for some to accept than his justice and judgment. Rebecca Manley Pippert said it well: "We are both moved by God's offer of forgiveness through the cross and we despise it at the same time. To accept forgiveness is the final blow to our pride. Forgiveness shows us that there is nothing we can do to earn God's acceptance. Forgiveness reveals not only our inability to change our nature but our inability to pay our debts" (*Hope Has Its Reasons*, 109; see also Titus 3:7).

3:5 *rebirth and renewal.* Nothing short of a complete transformation, from the inside out, is sufficient to bring about God's purposes in us (see 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Col. 3:10).

3:6 *poured out on us generously.* What is poured out is the Holy Spirit (v. 5). The Holy Spirit has always been active in God's dealing with human history (see Luke 2:25). Following Pentecost, however, Jesus' special promise to his disciples was that "In a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:4–5, 7–8).

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

3:8 *stress . . . so that.* The whole point of Paul's teaching and his concern that Timothy and Titus emphasize certain principles was the spiritual well-being of God's people. What looks to the unregenerate like difficult rules are actually "profitable for everyone" (see Jer. 29:11).

3:9 *avoid foolish controversies . . . unprofitable and useless.* See notes on 1 Timothy 1:4 and 6:4.

3:10 *Warn . . . once . . . a second time. . . . After that.* Paul reinforced his warnings about divisiveness with a plan by which to deal with such situations. Earlier he wrote, "Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Christ himself taught the principles for dealing with disciplinary issues within the church in Matthew 18:15–17.

3:11 *self-condemned.* One reason the church does not always deal with divisiveness within its ranks is the problem of false guilt. Any parent can attest to the fact that administering discipline can be difficult and emotionally draining. Because Paul understood this human frailty, he assured Titus that when a person is truly "warped and sinful," the guilt rests fully on that person.

Communicating God's Grace through Deeds

KJV	NIV
8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.	**8** This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.
9 But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.	**9** But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.
10 A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;	**10** Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them.
11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.	**11** You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.

As wonderful as the assurance of heaven is to all who believe in Jesus Christ, we are saved here and now for an earthly purpose as well as a heavenly one. Too often, our focus is on the eternal bliss when we should be about our heavenly Father's business where we are. Sometimes we need to be reminded of what we have been saved from in order to have the right attitude as his earthly servants.

The Cretan Christians had been a motley crew indeed, much like all Christians before salvation (**at one time we too were foolish**, v. 3). Even though Paul laid high claim to his pre-conversion past (see Phil. 3:5–6), he identified with these Cretan Christians in their foolishness (disobedience, passions, stubbornness, and sinfulness). Certainly, their lives before Christ had been heading in the wrong direction (**malice**, **envy**, and hatred, Titus 3:3).

The great news in this passage is found in these dynamic words: **he saved us** (v. 5). Salvation makes a change in every believer's life. We have a great message for every individual: God's **mercy**, love, and grace can and will make you a new person in Christ.

Paul was clear in emphasizing that salvation is not by our works or personal righteousness. It is God through Christ that makes us righteous in his sight. Paul used the symbol of baptism

PERSONAL NOTES

(**washing of rebirth**, v. 5) to illustrate that our sinfulness is washed away. We are renewed **by the Holy Spirit**. Three great benefits are identified: being **justified**, becoming **heirs**, and **having the hope of eternal life** (v. 7). How easy it would be to think that is all there is to being a Christian, but Paul made it clear that there is more. We are saved now so that we may devote ourselves **to doing what is good** (v. 8). In verse 1, he spoke about being ready to do good. In verse 8, he challenged them to get on with it, **to devote themselves to doing what is good**. There was a reason why they were to be engaged in so doing. It is because it is **excellent and profitable**. God wants every believer's life to be profitable, to accomplish things worthwhile. We have an earthly reason to live for Christ while we await all that heaven and eternity holds for us.

The Cretans were known for disputes and arguments over things of minimal value (**genealogies**, **quarrels about the law**, v. 9). Paul warned them not to get bogged down with things that were **unprofitable and useless**, but to focus on things of highest value and do good. Paul's counsel regarding **a divisive person** (v. 10) is worth noting. **Warn** them **once**, even **a second time**. But if that doesn't effect change, **have nothing to do with them. . . . Such people are . . . self-condemned** (v. 11). Do not permit such a person to divert you from your purpose. Continue doing what is good.

Explore UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. How would you describe your life before coming to know Christ as Savior?
2. How does a person become a Christian?
3. What kinds of things ought we as believers to be doing while we await our heavenly home?

THREE: Christian devotion results in a productive life (Titus 3:12–15).

KJV	*NIV*
12 When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter.	**12** As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there.

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE Two

1. Calls for a personal response.

2. A person becomes a Christian when they repent of their sins, put their trust in Christ for salvation and experience the washing of rebirth and the renewal by the Holy Spirit.

3. Calls for a personal response. Includes such things as compassionate deeds, giving to those in need, sharing one's faith.

EXAMINE **THREE:** Use a concordance or Bible software to discover the verses that teach the crucial importance of "doing good." Discuss the difference between doing good works in order to be saved and being saved in order to do good works.

3:12 *Artemas or Tychicus.* Titus was "on assignment" in Corinth when Paul wrote this letter, and Paul longed for a firsthand report of the progress being made there against false doctrine (see 2 Cor. 7:5–6). To that purpose, he proposed to send one of two replacements, thus freeing Titus to come to him. Artemas is not mentioned elsewhere, but Tychicus was a proven member of Paul's evangelistic team (see Acts 20:4; Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:12).

3:12 *Nicopolis.* Paul probably referred here to a seaport town on the Adriatic northwest of Corinth, although we have no record of his spending time there.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

3:13 *Zenas . . . Apollos.* While the term *lawyer* could apply to a specialist in Jewish ritual law, Zenas is a Roman name, making it likely that his milieu was secular Roman law. Apollos was a convert from Alexandria, Egypt—an effective preacher and debater. A convert of John the Baptist, he learned about faith in Jesus Christ through the discipling efforts of Priscilla and Aquila (see Acts 18:24–26).

3:14 *must learn . . . in order.* The Christian life involves constant learning. While an emphasis on doctrinal purity is important, of equal importance is the application of biblical principles to daily living. And daily living includes practical things—like supporting a family and paying bills (see 1 Tim. 5:8).

3:15 *Everyone with me.* In contrast to the time to come when he would be forsaken by trusted helpers and left to stand trial alone, Paul was at this point surrounded by friends and associates.

Communicating God's Grace through Deeds

KJV	NIV
13 Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them. **14** And let our's also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful. **15** All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.	**13** Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need. **14** Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives. **15** Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.

Paul began this section with a personal note to Titus. He referred to two men who were evidently his associates. We know nothing more about **Artemas** (v. 12) because he is mentioned only in this verse. We do know that **Tychicus** was a trusted friend of Paul's who assisted him in ministry (see Acts 20:4; Eph. 6:21–22; Col. 4:7–9; 2 Tim. 4:12). Even here, he talked again about doing good things that would be of benefit to others. Among them was the admonition to see that **Zenas the lawyer and Apollos** (Titus 3:13) had everything they needed. Compassion and concern for others should certainly be evident among believers. Paul used that illustration to emphasize once again his desire for them to become devoted **to doing what is good** (v. 14).

In the first verses of this chapter, Paul spoke of having the right attitude regarding good works. In verse 8, he wrote of being devoted to doing good. In verse 14, he talked about learning to be devoted to doing good. It seems that doing good is something we all know we should be doing, but it is also something we can learn how to do better.

In verse 14, the term **unproductive lives** is mentioned. Certainly, no one wants to live a life that could be described by such a term, but one does not have to be a wild sinner in order to live such a life. Unproductivity is the result of failing to do that which is productive. When one fails to do good, the result is unproductivity. Busyness and earthly accomplishments can fall short of productivity when the measure is eternity. Our earthly and spiritual lives are so intertwined that we must make sure our productivity in life contributes to both aspects.

PERSONAL NOTES

Communicating God's Grace through Deeds

Devotion, as used in this passage, is more than prayer and Bible reading. It is being consumed with the goal of doing good. In his final well wishes, Paul mentioned two important spiritual qualities of life: **love** and **grace** (v. 15). Believers are to love one another **in the faith**. When they do so, grace will be with them. We never in this life will outgrow our need for God's grace.

Explore Understanding God's Word

1. Why are believers to be concerned about the needs of others?
2. What steps can we take in learning to devote ourselves to doing what is good?
3. How would you describe a productive life in light of eternity?

Exercise Life Application

Today's study emphasized daily living.

As you consider your daily living, how would you rate yourself in carrying out Paul's admonition to do what is good? What good deed will you commit yourself to doing this week?

PERSONAL NOTES

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

EXPLORE Three

1. We should be concerned because it is Christlike and because it is the right thing to do.
2. We can find a need and fill it, and become increasingly involved in using our gifts and talents to help others.
3. Calls for a personal response. May include one that effectively shares God's love with others; one that brings others in touch with God's grace; one that does good whenever possible.

EXERCISE Closing

Summarize the principles for living taught in the epistles to Timothy and Titus. Point out the importance of right beliefs, behaviors, and relationships in the church.

Help class members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Civil Disobedience" (p. 380) from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4*.

TEACHER STUDY NOTES

PERSONAL NOTES

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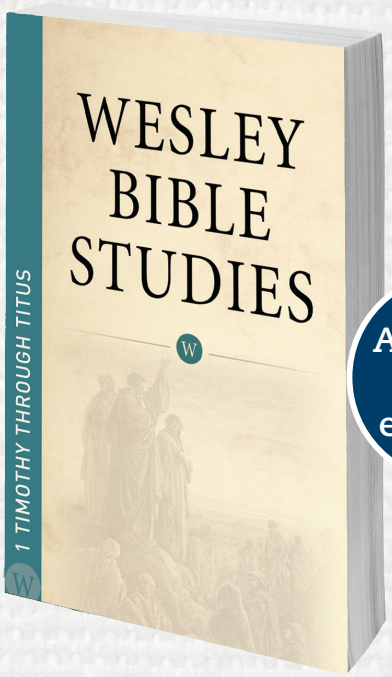

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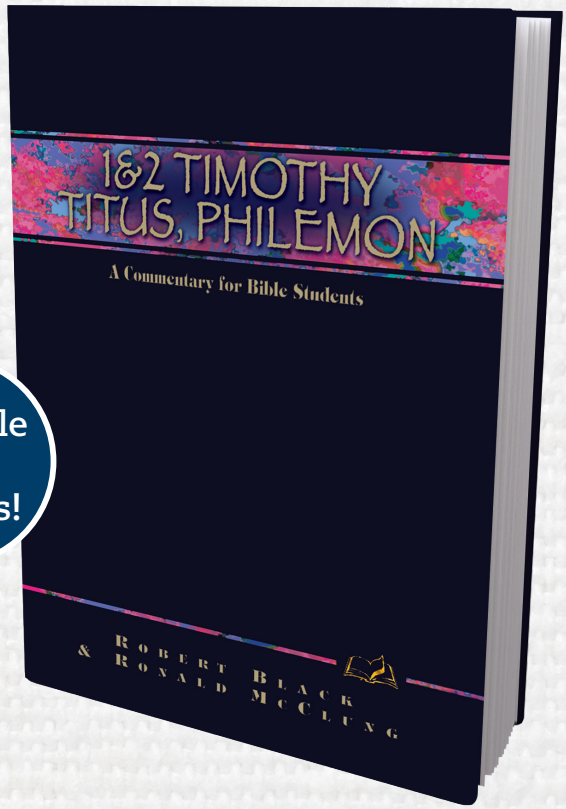

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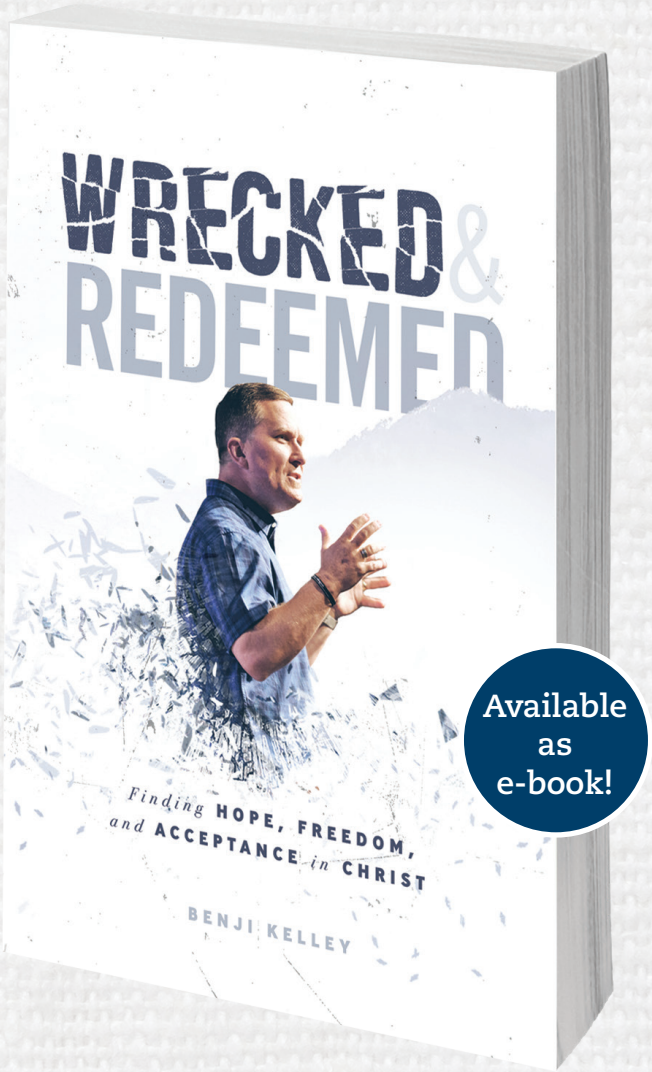

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