

Weekly Devotional

[Pass It On]

A Study in 1st and 2nd Timothy



May 23-27, 2011

Study Questions

1. What evidence does this chapter offer about God's personality?
2. What would you say are the most important verbs—the action words—in this chapter?
3. What does Paul say about prayer in this chapter?
4. What insights do you find in this chapter regarding the right way to approach God in worship?
5. Try to “read between the lines” as you think about Paul's words in this chapter. What foundational principles would you say are the source of Paul's teaching here?



Monday

Read: 1 Timothy 2



Chapters 2 and 3 of this letter deal with instructions for the church with regards to worship and leadership. In some respects, the teachings seem out of date. It is important not to just throw out certain scripture passages because they seem archaic, but instead to discern what they are teaching in their cultural context and then try and prayerfully discern what it means to apply the teaching to our cultural context.

For example: In Ephesians 6 Paul writes about how “slaves” and “masters” are to relate to one another. Does this passage teach that it is ok to have a slave? I don’t believe it does. Slaves were a part of the culture in Paul’s day, that doesn’t mean slavery was a good thing. In fact, the reason Paul writes about the issue is because slaves were becoming Christians and starting to treat their Christian masters as brothers, as equals. In some cases they were becoming leaders and teachers. Paul wrote to correct the abuse that was occurring with slaves talking back to their masters and he wrote asking Christian masters to behave lovingly towards their slaves, treating them as people of value. Because we no longer believe in slavery, should we skip over this passage? No. Today we might draw a parallel to employers and employees or to any relationship where one person is able to exercise power over another.

Paul’s bottom line is for people to come to know Jesus. If we do something, even if it is allowed, which causes another to stumble, we should refrain. And if there is some action we can take which will enable another to be open to the gospel, even if it means giving up our rights, we should. What is your bottom line: comfort, expedience, your rights, or someone coming to know Jesus?

Pray for an opportunity to show extraordinary love to someone today.

Tuesday

Read: 1 Timothy 2, Romans 13:1-8



Paul's desire is for the gospel to move forward. In order for this to happen, several things are necessary: First, prayer for the circumstances to be right for the gospel to be proclaimed and accepted (1 Tim 2:1-7). Secondly, behavior that allows people to be open to hear verses questioning whether those talking really believe what they are preaching. Finally, attractive behavior that will draw people to desire what the gospel offers (2:8-15).

Paul begins focusing on prayer. God has so wired the world that He responds to the prayers of His people. If something is to happen it begins with prayer. It is important to remember that what Paul is asking is for people to pray for and submit to often corrupt, evil, non-God-fearing, governments. All too often, Christians today are known for their disrespect for those they disagree with, especially those in politics. We have been given the right to vote, to decide who our leaders are to be and to even question them; but God does not give us the right to show disrespect towards them. With freedom, Christians today have opportunities Paul never dreamed would be possible. But with these freedoms, to work for change, to vote for that which is Godly, we are not given the freedom to be unloving. Instead, we are reminded again and again that what is important is not our own rights, but that others would come to know the love of Jesus.

When those in authority are happy, they are more apt to allow things to change, or for evangelism to take place. Christians are called to love our enemies and pray for them (Mt. 5:43-48). Part of the reason Christianity spreads in the midst of persecution is because the witness of love in the midst of evil provides credibility to our witness.

Do you show respect to those you disagree with? Do you delete disrespectful e-mails or pass them on? Do you pray for those who dislike you, whom you dislike? We are called not to pick and choose scriptures to follow, but to allow Jesus to not only be our Savior, but also our Lord. Pray blessings for those you disagree with.



Wednesday

Read: 1 Timothy 2

God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that the world might be saved (John 3:16). The gospel is exclusive (the only way to heaven is through Jesus), but it is also inclusive (God wants everyone, even my least favorite person/enemy, to be saved). God paid the ultimate price for our salvation.

What am I giving that others would know such love? What price am I willing to pay? Am I giving of my time to pray? Am I living in a way that displays both Godliness and Holiness? Do I have a good reputation? For the good news of God's love to spread, an orderly and peaceful society helps, but people must see the genuineness of the gospel in our lives. We are called to do all in our power to be attractive to others. We are called to live in such a way as to not even give a hint of having any sort of greed or unholiness (Eph. 5:3).

Paul stresses the necessity of prayer, but closely behind is having a becoming lifestyle. Leading a quiet life, dressing modestly, not being conspicuous, making sure that I am living in peaceful, forgiving relationships are examples of having a becoming lifestyle. How are you doing? Is there some break in a relationship that you have not sought forgiveness for? Are you known for your anger? Would someone question your love for the poor based on your dress or lifestyle?

Reading this passage might cause women to question whether they can braid their hair or wear gold earrings. In Paul's day such outside adornment would speak of a woman being a prostitute, or an unbecoming wealthy woman with no regard for others. In our day, wearing gold earrings and braiding ones hair is common. So, what are the things in our day that would cause people to question or distract from our witness? Ask God if there is something about your lifestyle that needs to be modified? Pray for those trying to witness in Muslim countries.

Thursday

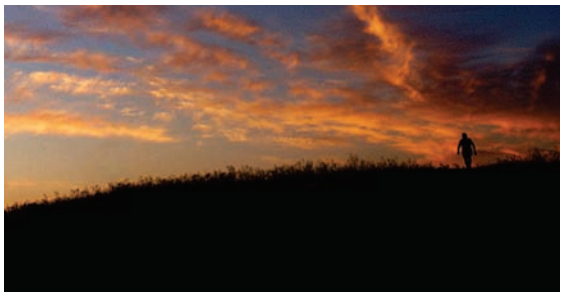
Read: 1 Timothy 2:11-15

An earlier church split in the Presbyterian church took place over the interpretation of this passage. Even today, many question women in leadership quoting these verses while others declare them out of date. How do we interpret them for today's culture without just ignoring them?

First it is important to understand the Greek in these verses. Our English translations can be misleading. For example: The English reading gives us the sense that women should never speak in church. The Greek verbage does not give us an exclusive never, but instead a more time sensitive statement: "I presently do not allow." In the Jewish synagogue, women were not allowed to read the scriptures, or even able to go to school and learn what they taught. Women sat in the back quietly. Here Paul breaks with all past tradition and says that women, before they speak or teach, should first learn. Notice he begins this section saying that women should learn (though in quietness and full submission). And the word we translate "authority" is literally "to domineer." Paul was actually pro women.

You have heard the idiom: "give someone an inch and they will take a mile." This is what was happening at the time in the church of Ephesus. Furthermore, remember Paul was writing because there was a substantial amount of false teaching occurring. Paul wanted to make sure that before one teaches, they are instructed well in order to prevent these false beliefs from taking hold. In other places, we see Paul actually allowing women to take leadership and to teach. Priscilla is understood to be the leader of the church that met in her home, especially since her husband's name is almost always mentioned second. And in the Old Testament, Deborah was one of the God-appointed Judges who lead the Israelites into battle.

So what is this verse teaching? First is to make sure that we are well informed before we speak. Secondly is to learn in submission, respecting our teachers (we often do not do this today). And third, that there are times when women should not teach, and I believe times when men should also refrain (i.e. one on one discipling of the opposite gender). Pray for women with poor self images.



Friday

Read: 1 Timothy 2; 2 Timothy 3:6-9



Before moving on to the 2 Timothy passage, one final comment about the closing verses of 1 Timothy 2. Again, the English can be misleading. The “for” of verse 13 is not a “for” of position, but might be better understood as “furthermore.” Paul is saying that women should receive instruction from men because Adam was formed first and instructed his wife. But this priority in creation is not a timeless ground for male dominance. In fact, women are saved through not “childbirth” (as the English renders it) but the birth of “the child” (meaning the Messiah). While Eve was deceived, it is from her progeny that Jesus was born, and in Jesus all women (as well as men) are saved if they continue in faith, love, and holiness.

The problem is, as we see in 2 Timothy 3, that some women, rather than learning through proper instruction, have allowed false teachers to fill them with ideas that are disrupting the church. Paul says these women are weighed down with sin and idleness. Often when we do not have a purpose in life, or are not busy working, we are prone to comment on what others are doing. It is easy to pass judgment and question from afar. And when we are unwilling to deal with our sin issues and change our behavior, we seek to find excuses and teachings that reinforce our sinful behaviors.

According to tradition, Jannes and Jambres were the two magicians who counterfeited Moses’ miracles before Pharaoh (Ex. 7:11-12). Just as Moses exposed them, so also the false teachers and teachings in the church at Ephesus and in our world today will be exposed. The question is: am I open to being corrected or do I too seek only those who will tell me what I want to hear?

Pray for this weekend’s services.



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