



Godly leadership & power

A study of both letters to Timothy

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This is a work of biblical opinion sharing the experiences of over thirty-five years of serving Jesus of Nazareth, teaching the scriptures, and walking in the spirit. All opinions should be examined and prayerfully considered before they are blindly acted upon.

Translations used:

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No Notation: This is my own paraphrase

The lexicons used

New Testament Greek Lexicon: this is based on Thayer's and Smith's Bible Dictionary plus others; this is keyed to the large Kittel and the "Theological Dictionary of the New Testament." These files are public domain.

*This book is dedicated to my wife
& our relationship as we grew
into the image of Jesus.
Without Pat, I would be
as bad as I was—
the hippie, Jesus-freak
she met at that Bible study
so many year ago.
Her copyediting & wisdom
greatly improved this book
and the entire series.*

*She went home December, 2019
& I miss her greatly.*

David

Why a verse by verse bible study?

This is the third book in the *Easily Understanding Scripture* series. If you've read either of the first two, you have seen that this is not how the Bible is commonly taught in the world today. This is not a sermon or a directed teaching. This is a simple explanation of the scripture, verse by verse. I have tried to add objective advice based on my forty-six years of experience in teaching and living within the Kingdom of God.

The purpose of this book

My desire is that you come to feel free to study and analyze scripture to make it more useful for you as you grow in the Lord. The goal is to teach you how to use multiple translations, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the brain God gave you to be enabled to more easily use scriptures as food for your spiritual growth. Bible study will be exciting as the Holy Spirit helps you come to realize the truth of the Gospel

To help you, the book is designed to be readable. Modern study bibles are marvelous gatherings of commentary—but often the Bible itself is lost in the clutter. *Easily Understanding Scriptures* is the result of a simple goal: presenting the bible richly in an easy to comprehend format to people who have a real desire to understand what was written and why it is important to us today.

Doctrinal position

I believe that the Bible is true, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and that we can rely upon it for training, correction, and learning about God: Father, Son & Holy Spirit. [2 Timothy 3:16–17

I am convinced that the church is deeply within the great delusion

talked about in II Thessalonians 2:11
and largely becoming apostate.

I know that walking and talking with
God in a personal relationship is the
purpose of creation with the goal of
our sanctification and fruitfulness..

Obviously, it is foolishness to think that I could possibly do this without the anointing of the Holy Spirit. On your part, it is equal foolishness to not pray for His guidance every time you pick up this book and your Bible. We cannot understand scripture without the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit—how much more do you need to be careful with a book written by an ordinary man. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the grace to see the truth and to be able to apply it to your life

Who am I?

My credentials: As far as the world is concerned—very little. What I have is experience—both the experience of reading many versions of scripture cover to cover many times and the experience of teaching and leading Bible studies since late 1974. I was also a full-time college-level instructor of digital publishing for over fifteen years and the author of several textbooks on those subjects. In addition I was the teaching pastor and liturgist for eleven years in a small Foursquare church in Albuquerque that went non-denominational as Crown of Thorns early in the millennium starting in 1993.

For the past 14 years, the Lord had my wife and me on a crash wilderness course of spiritual growth. I have matured in ways I didn't know existed. My idea is to share some of these revelations with you by the grace of God. My hope is that the Lord can use this to help you.

Scripture versions & usage

There is no best version

My experience has conclusively proven to me that no one version has the best translation. You need to read a variety. My suggestion is that as soon as your bible is filled with so many notes that you are no longer making notes—it is time to get a new bible and a new version of the bible. There are no spirit-filled translations that I know of—though Jack Hayford led a group to produce the Spirit-filled Life study bible.

I began with the RSV. My father (who mentored me) was convinced that this was the best, most literal translation of the day. But we had many versions (and even more today). Pat was fond of the Jerusalem Bible—an excellent Roman translation from the French with strongly slanted denominational footnotes. I have become a firm believer in using many translations and a few paraphrases to build a consensus of accuracy. My usual choices are (in no particular order): New American Standard Bible [NASB], Revised Standard [RSV], Modern English Version [MEV], New King James [NKJV], New International [NIV], New Living Translation [NLT], Amplified [Amp], and many more. For study purposes, I normally use biblegateway.com—which I highly recommend.

Modern Viking Paraphrase

In this book, I will be teaching from my personal understanding of what is right and true. This is result of trying to help people in my Bible studies understand what the Holy Spirit was saying through the writers of the books of the Bible. I will put in relevant version copies, as necessary. This not only allows me to keep the copyright

police calm, but I can also combine appropriate versions into a composite reading that my experience suggests will be more meaningful to you. I will give you references so you can look it up in your personal favorite—follow the book in your Bible.

The MVP: are you offended?

You'll want to follow in your favorite version(s) to make sure that you can see why I slant my paraphrase toward the core meanings I see in the text. You don't have to agree. You do need to pray for wisdom.

Your responsibility: Read this with your mind and Bible open.

I am convinced that your active participation in the study and analysis of these verses is the only way the Holy Spirit will be able to actually change your life for the better through these teachings. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you and teach you. This is his primary job given by Jesus as found in John 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:13–15 plus 1 John 2:27.

This is my prayer: That you will be brought closer to the Lord, that you will end up knowing Him better, and that the power available to all believers is more active in your life.

Becoming a believer

If at any time throughout this short book you come to realize that you might not truly be a believer or a citizen of the Kingdom of God—there is a simple solution. You must recognize what Jesus did for us on the cross, bringing us forgiveness for our sin. All you need to do is renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil. Ask the Lord to show you your sin. You then repent of your selfish, sinful ways

and turn to Jesus for forgiveness. Then you ask Jesus to come live within you, and fill you with His Holy Spirit. Acknowledge Him as the Lord and King of your life. That's all there is to it. You can do this at any time. If you are in doubt, please do it now.

Are you a citizen of the Kingdom of God?

Only if you have specifically asked to be a part of it. You cannot get in because your parents are, or were, believers. You must ask for yourself. Have you done that?

At the back of the book are two Appendices

[Appendix A:](#)

This is a list of study tools—books and Websites which will help you as you make studying scripture an important part of your walk in the Spirit.

[Appendix Two:](#)

This is my testimony.

You can click on either link to go there.

Timothy

I and II Timothy are copies of pastoral letters Paul wrote to Timothy. This young man had become his best help and a spiritual son to him. We meet Timothy in the first verses of Acts 16: 1-4

Paul went first to Derbe and then to Lystra, where there was a young disciple named Timothy. His mother was a Jewish believer, but his father was a Greek. Timothy was well thought of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium, so Paul wanted him to join them on their journey. In deference to the Jews of the area, he arranged for Timothy to be circumcised before they left, for everyone knew that his father was a Greek. [NLT]

Dealing with Mark

It probably helps us understand if we remember that this was the second trip of Paul's apostleship. It began with an argument between him and Barnabas. Paul refused to take Mark along because he had bailed on the first trip, leaving mid-trip to head back to Jerusalem. So Barnabas left with Mark and Paul took his friend Silas. [Acts 15: 36-40]

Lystra was where Paul was stoned (left for dead) on his first missionary journey—when the churches in the area were founded. Jewish troublemakers from Antioch and Iconium had shown up. [Acts 14: 19-20] A strong church had sprung up there and Timothy was a member, respected by those churches.

It is interesting that at this point, Paul had Timothy circumcised. I just finished the *Learning to Walk in Freedom* book on the letter to the Galatians where we spent a lot of time dealing with the heresy of the circumcision requirement for Gentile believers. Apparently, this early in his ministry, Paul still thought it necessary to have Timothy

circumcised probably to enable Timothy to help him in the synagogues when they first arrived in a new city.

Indispensable helper

My guess is that a couple of things were going on here. First, Paul really wanted a helper who understood the Gospel as he taught it. Second, Paul may well have needed a regular helper due to his physical condition. We have no idea what his physical problem was other than the few hints Paul gives in his letters [2 Corinthians 12: 7-10] and some comments near the end of Acts 24: 23; 27: 3].

In Philippians 2:20-22 Paul writes:

I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare. All the others care only for themselves and not for what matters to Jesus Christ. But you know how Timothy has proved himself. Like a son with his father, he has served with me in preaching the Good News. [NLT]

They obviously had developed a very tight relationship. These letters to Timothy later, when Timothy was one of the leaders in Ephesus, are a result of that bond. Timothy had evidently been assigned there because the church was in trouble. Paul felt the need to mentor his “son”—frustrated that he could not go there to help.

The last mention we have of Timothy is in Hebrews 13: 23 where it simply says that Brother Timothy has been released from jail. This might be the most clear evidence that Paul did not write Hebrews—for he certainly would not have referred to Timothy in such a formal manner.

The writing style of these letters

Many have noted that the two letters to Timothy are not written in the same style as the rest of Paul’s letters. I found what I consider the best explanation for that in

a commentary from England at a site called www.agabus.co.uk where Alec Barber proposes that the stylistic differences are clearly because Timothy helped write almost all of the Epistles except for Ephesians.

Be that as it may be, both of these letters are obviously from Paul to Timothy—written out of love for his son in the Lord.

I Timothy: Chapter 1

Verse 1:1–2

This letter is from Paul, one sent out (made an apostle) by Jesus the Messiah, appointed by the command of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus, who is our hope. I am writing to Timothy, my true son in the faith. May God the Father and Jesus our Lord and Messiah give you grace, mercy, and peace.

A warm greeting to his son in the Lord. My assumption is that, as usual, he is dictating the letter—which accounts for the slight formality.

Again, Paul refers to himself as an apostle. This seems to be a defensive thing. In other letters, Paul confesses that he feels like he is treated as a lesser apostle because he was not one of the Twelve. Whatever the cause, Paul almost always makes sure that he includes his calling (which is his credentials) at the beginning of each letter.

As he has written elsewhere, Paul clearly considers Timothy his most trusted disciple. Timothy is the person who took Paul's teaching and lived it out.

Verse 1:3–4

When I left for Macedonia, I urged you to stay there in Ephesus and put a stop to those with false teachings. Don't let them waste their time in endless discussion of myths, fables, and genealogies. These only lead to meaningless speculations, which don't help people live a life of faith in God.

This is why my wife, as senior pastor of our church in Albuquerque, finally had me quit teaching prophecy. The endless speculations were a serious hindrance to sick and damaged people as far as growing in the Lord were concerned. We're left to imagine what the problems were in Ephesus—but important enough to leave Timothy behind.

I know that over the years I have spend some dreadfully dull times listening to people argue about the differences between the two genealogies of Jesus that are found in the Luke and Matthew. That's not nearly as bad as the old high church/low church arguments in the Episcopal and Lutheran churches, or even the Protestant/Catholic debates.

One of the things we must learn as believers is that many of these issues are counter-productive—at best. You need to take a stand according to the church within which you are called to fellowship. But there is never going to be a scriptural basis for the debates on religious services of Holy Communion, the Eucharist, and so on. There is no Biblical liturgical standard for baptisms or confirmation, or baptism with the Spirit, and all the rest. Originally in the church, confirmation was taught as something very similar to the baptism of the spirit for children coming of age. The church has the same issues with infant baptism as the Jews did with infant circumcision. Making babies members brings in non-believers to the assembly. However, those issues are solved simply with excellent Godly leadership that teaches by example what true belief is.

Doctrine is important, but not for arguments or speculation. It enables you to determine who you want to fellowship with. However, *never* assume that the group you belong to has a lock on the truth. Every additional year I live on this planet within the Kingdom I become more certain that the Whole Truth is far larger than we can possibly imagine.

An example: being “filled with the spirit”

A personal definition: Pat and I were taught, experienced, and believe this is a separate event in the life of a believer where the Holy Spirit is given

in power—among other things, manifesting in the gifts listed in I Corinthians 12:4–11. These gifts are not something we do but power we are given to minister to each other and unbelievers. The Holy Spirit gives these gifts as He wishes to whom He wishes.

Here are some common doctrinal statements about this experience.

I have heard all of these positions defended with great vigor. What is obvious is that the Lord provides and allows for a wide variety of beliefs on this issue.

- ✝ Charismatic thought tells us that this happens as a result of a conscious request to God made by an adult.
- ✝ Some say it is always accompanied by tongues.
- ✝ Some say that tongues is the first gift manifested.
- ✝ Some say that it requires the laying on of hands by a pastor, elder, or priest.
- ✝ Some say it requires the laying on of hands by another believer.
- ✝ Some have experienced it in privacy
- ✝ Some say it is always an overwhelming emotional experience.
- ✝ Some say it is a simple, intellectual transaction made with God—you ask and He answers.
- ✝ Some say it is wonderful and useful and available.
- ✝ Some say you must be baptized first.
- ✝ Some say water baptism is not tied to the baptism of the spirit.
- ✝ Some say it is necessary for salvation.
- ✝ Some say salvation comes with baptism.
- ✝ Some say salvation comes from a confession of faith.

The fact is that I personally know someone who is obviously saved and filled with the spirit for each of these

fourteen statements. I know a spirit-filled woman who knows the Lord as well as anyone I've met who does not even believe that the gifts are for today—yet the Lord uses her in the gifts on a regular basis.

Here are the basic facts as I know them concerning this area of belief. If you want to know the Lord well and give up your life to know Him better and serve Him, you will end up saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. The path you follow that winds up at that end result will vary widely from person to person. The important thing is that you ask the Lord to fill you with the Holy Spirit and that you give Jesus control of your life. Once those basic faith criteria are met, the fulfillment of it is up to the Lord. Who am I to say how He will do that in you?

Verse 1:5

The goal of our instruction is a love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a true faith.

Paul's focus is on Jesus' basic command: we are to love in holiness (a pure heart), freedom (a good conscience), and faith. Anything that gets us off that goal is a misdirection. This is a strong call to sanctification.

Sanctification

From Strong's for the Greek word *hagiasmos*; properly, purification, (the state of) purity — holiness, sanctification. This is part of the same group of words: holy, saints, and so on. I Thessalonians 4:3 says it the most clearly: This is the will of God, your sanctification

Verse 1:6–7

Some people miss these core truths replacing them with empty talk. They want to be teachers of the Law

of Moses. But they don't know what they are talking about, even though they speak very confidently.

Paul talks about one of my major warning signs in a teacher. We always need to discern what we are taught. Yes, teachers carry a higher load of responsibility. But we are not supposed to be brain-dead either.

I have found this to be commonly true: if you find that the teachings are all from the Old Testament about principles of the Law you have a real problem.

I'm not saying that the Law has no place in Christian teaching. Jesus said that He came to fulfill the law, not destroy it. We need to know it. The Law has great power in helping to explain what we experience in Christian living. But we must remember that God knows the law is of no use in producing righteousness. He sent Jesus to set us free from the law. The operating principle is here:

But now we have been set free from the law, for we died (the penalty has been paid) and we are no longer in bondage to its power. Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit. [ROMANS 7:6]

The Law is true and wonderful wisdom. The problem is that we cannot fulfill the Law—except by the power of the Holy Spirit. We cannot access this spiritual power without forgetting about the Law and putting our whole trust in Jesus—who He is and what he did. He will see to it that the Law is fulfilled to His satisfaction in our life.

This is the real wisdom of God's plan for salvation. Faith is required to be sure. But walking in the Spirit requires a constant, active, engaged relationship that cannot be done

by habit. It's a way of living that requires constant communication even though we cannot see Him face to face.

Verse 1:8–11

We know that the law is good when used according to the rules. But we also know that the law was not intended for the just or righteous. It is for people who are lawless and rebellious, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and profane, who kill their father or mother or commit other murders. The law is for people who are sexually immoral, homosexual, kidnappers (or slave traders), liars, who swear falsely, or do anything else that contradicts the sound doctrine and teaching that comes from the glorious Gospel entrusted to me by our blessed God.

It sounds like the world as we know it. All of these things are major issues on our modern society. The sex traders have made slavery a modern phenomenon. Children murdering their parents has become so common that it's barely reported on the news any more. Gay activists are blackmailing our society. This is why the law was given—to consign these activities to lawlessness.

We must teach and remind the people we know and our children that these things are sin. They are completely unacceptable. There is absolute truth.

But it is impossible for mankind to live by the rule of law. Only by the Holy Spirit, after we accept Jesus as our Lord, can we be made just and righteous by God himself.

Verse 1:12–14

I thank Jesus our Lord and Messiah, who has given me strength to do his work. He considered me trustworthy and appointed me to serve him, even though I used to blaspheme the name of the Messiah. In my insolence, I persecuted his people. But he had mercy on me because I didn't know what I was doing, and I had

not yet put my faith in him. Oh, how generous and gracious our Lord was to me! He has blessed my life with the faith and love that are his and found in him.

This should give us all hope. This is a remembrance of what I have written elsewhere many times. It is the same thing Paul refers to here. The provision in Jesus is complete. In Galatians he said it this way:

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but the Messiah lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God [GALATIANS 2:20]

My new life is the result of His faith and love. He does this in me. He loves me enough to provide for my sanctification. I will be holy, because He is holy [inside of me].

Verse 1:15–17

This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: “The Messiah, Jesus, came into the world to save sinners”—and I am the worst of them all. But God had mercy on me so that Jesus our Messiah could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life. All honor and glory to God forever and ever! He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; he alone is God. Amen.

There is nothing that can keep you from salvation—if you want it. All sin can be forgiven. Any person can be saved: rich or poor, smart or mentally challenged, beautiful or ugly, weak or powerful.

In fact, as I have said so many times, when you are born the most challenging handicaps with which you can be faced are to be born with any or all of these attributes:

✚ Rich

✚ Beautiful

✚ Powerful

✚ Strong

✚ Smart

People with all of these wonderful attributes (according to the flesh) almost never come to salvation. People with this type of *blessing* most commonly do not feel any need for God.

We've learned this through painful experience with millionaires in our groups and churches. So far none of them ever came to faith (as far as we know). They'd fly off to their other house in (whatever wonderful location) any time they had to deal with boredom, pain, spiritual turmoil, or deep seeking of the truth.

Yes, I know there are saved millionaires—but they are rare. Most rich are not interested in God at all.

Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God. [LUKE 18:25 NIV]

Verse 1: 18–20

Timothy, my son, here are my instructions for you, based on the prophetic words spoken about you earlier. May they help you fight the good fight. Cling to your faith in the Messiah, and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked. Hymenaeus and Alexander are two examples. I threw them out and handed them over to Satan so they might learn not to blaspheme God.

Here we have a stern warning for Timothy to keep straight. This is a strong call to sanctification—keeping our thoughts and actions directed toward the Lord as much as we are able. We must diligently seek His guidance and power in our lives to live the life He calls us to.

The warning is that people who apparently believed as strongly as Timothy have fallen away into heresy or worse. It is possible to waste or destroy your faith—ruin your life by making bad choices.

Our faith is a battle. It is warfare against an enemy who hates us and wants to destroy us. Unless we take the fight seriously, we can really make a mess of things.

Handing over to Satan

No one ever wants to talk about this. Discipline in the modern church is unheard of or is very rare. This is a failure of leadership. Paul is trying to train Timothy to be a strong, spirit-filled leader.

There are a couple of things going on here. First is the act of kicking heretics and apostates out of the fellowship of believers. That is a major thing to believers, as a lot of our help from the Lord comes through our brothers and sisters. Confirmation, strength, inspiration and more come from believers we know.

Handing a person over to Satan goes beyond that. All we can do is guess—as Paul certainly did not leave any teachings or instruction on this. But there are things we know from what we read:

1. This is radical and leaders need to pray hard and seek the guidance of the Spirit in love before determining that a person has reached a place of heresy and/or apostasy which requires amputation: The leadership group does not do this to a person unless they are convinced by the Holy Spirit that it is necessary.
2. This is not a religious prescription: There is no procedure and it is not common enough to have developed a traditional approach.

3. Because much of our prayer life is concerned with protection from the enemy—no longer praying for that protection is part of this radical spiritual therapy.
4. All a person has to do is be in the world without a spiritual covering to be in the hands of Satan and his power.
5. The reason for doing it is not punishment, but a hope of repentance: This is applied spiritual therapy prescribed by the Lord in the hope of healing and restoration. In the phraseology of last millennium—tough love.

Dealing with troublemakers in the church is a major problem—especially now that much of the traditionally organized church has gone heretical and some are near apostasy. You cannot teach as church policy that times have changed and sin is no longer sin. The law has not been rewritten and the Lord is still the same.

Jesus tells us to be fruit inspectors. He gives us a strong warning—one that has become more relevant today. Beware of false prophets who come dressed as sheep but are really vicious wolves. You can identify them by their fruit. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? A healthy tree produces good fruit, and a sick tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. Every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. You will know them by their fruit. [MATTHEW 7:15–20]

So, the obvious question to be asked is, “What is fruit?” Thankfully we have a clear answer from Paul in his letter to the Galatians, “...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”. This kind of character can be faked—for a short while, So, it will take a little time.

The interesting turn of phrase is “chopped down and thrown in the fire”. This seems to be a clear reference to these wolves not being saved—not citizens of the Kingdom. Yet, they come appearing to be sheep to attack the sheep from within the flock. This is an entire area that the modern church does not discuss at all.

You are not left defenseless!

You are not dependent upon leadership. You are dependent upon the Holy Spirit. The leaders’ responsibility is in group settings. Plus they are there to help you if you have any questions in these areas. But the Holy Spirit in you will give you the gift of discernment if you need it in any particular situation. Just ask him.

Remember! In heaven before the judgment seat, when you are asked why did you do that or why did you believe that? “My Pastor told me to,” is not an acceptable answer [neither is “my husband told me to”]. You are responsible for your own decisions in the Lord. Thank God! He is trustworthy, by His Holy Spirit.

Hearing the Lord

If you have noticed, it all comes back to being able to hear the Lord and receive instruction from Him. This is your most important skill to learn while you are still in the flesh. Clear communication with the Lord is essential. It takes work. If you need help in this area, check out our book, [The Wife of Jesus](#). There is a very frank discussion there on how to hear from the Lord and the necessity of learning how to do this. It is not optional, and it is necessary for salvation according to John 17:3 and many other scripture verses.

I Timothy: Chapter 2

Verse 2:1-4

First of all I urge you to pray for all people asking God to help; interceding for them, and giving thanks. Likewise, pray for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.

As we get into leadership training, the first thing covered is prayer. Church leadership must have a continuous, constant prayer life and be convinced that without clear communication nothing worthwhile will happen.

This is rare in the church today. A lot of it has to do with fruit confusion. Fruit is taught as if it were: people won to the Lord, buildings built, ministries developed, trophies won in a Christian life of success.

As I've written elsewhere [see *Learning to Walk in Freedom*, the study in Galatians], fruit is the character of Jesus becoming our character in daily living. We cannot win people to Jesus. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. He only does this in answer to requests.

Why do we pray?

If the power all comes from God why do we strive so hard to win souls and build edifices and organizations? This is where we see the peculiar nature of prayer. Prayer has two major purposes;

1. Building a relationship: most of prayer is an ongoing personal communication with our Lord and Messiah.
2. Involving God in your life: God has consciously limited his involvement in the world in many cases. He will not move unless one of His children asks Him to do so.

All believers are expected to pray and intercede for those people in their circle of life. We pray for our family, friends, coworkers, associates, and anyone else the Holy Spirit puts on our heart. All of us have different areas of influence. But there's nothing we can't pray for.

When Pat hears an ambulance go down the street she prays for protection for the driver and against accidents. She prays for the person the ambulance has been dispatched to help. When we leave the house we pray for protection for the property the Lord has given us to steward and for protection as we drive from other drivers, breakdowns, and all the rest. All of these things are within our normal authority and responsibility.

More importantly, we all have limited areas of responsibility. As usual, we are dealing with Satan's counterfeit. Much has been written about the Creep's rigid hierarchy and the structure of the kosmos. That's not for us to cover here. All we need to know is that structures like this are counteracted departmentally. We need to understand that God puts us in places to counteract that satanic organization—specific demonic strongholds aligned against us.

Leaders have spheres of influence

God calls us to certain areas of responsibility. Every leader has that and needs to be sure that he or she asks and listens to the Lord to find out what the personal limits of influence are specifically. Power in prayer has a lot to do with exercising your authority and protection over those given to you as your responsibility.

You may be responsible for your apartment, home, a neighborhood, town, city, county, metropolitan area, state, province, country, group of people, type of worker, or anything else. Mainly you need to know what that area is and

then begin praying for them. You are to pray for them as a group. You need to intercede for individuals as you come to know need. You are to thank the Lord for what He is doing within your group.

One of the larger areas of responsibility is to pray for the governmental authorities that affect your group. We pray for Godly leadership and the Lord's protection. These are not blanket prayers, but specific areas of influence and specific people who directly affect your ministry and your people.

General prayers have little power

It sounds "sweet" when a child prays that God will heal all the sick in the world. But a child has no authority or responsibility. When someone with a worldwide ministry prays prayers like that, miracles of healing break out. But even here, the prayers will be much more effective when prayed for the people who will come to that specific crusade where the minister will be speaking.

If God has called you to minister to a city, you need to get involved with the rest of the ministers who have the same call and build a leadership alliance to lead prayer for the city. If you have been given a certain demographic within that city, your responsibility is to blanket those people with prayer, intercession, and thanksgiving that, in effect, gives God permission to work within that group.

I know it's absurd to think of giving God permission for anything. After all, He is Almighty God. But He has limited Himself in this. You will find that He will work for your people in direct proportion to the amount of prayer time spent getting Him involved. This is a large part of the walk of faith—asking God to work.

Why are a mother's prayers so powerful?

Now you can understand why a mother is so effective when praying for her young children. This is why the father's prayers for his children are crucial for their spiritual growth and protection. They are a direct responsibility given by the Lord.

In our sick society, you will find that this is true of step-parents also. This is a voluntary acceptance of responsibility and will never attain the power of a blood parent. But, if the blood parents are non-believers or do not pray, a stepparent can have immense influence on their stepchildren. God can bring in a new mate to help a single parent after repentance as he or she recovers from divorce.

We are salt

You know Jesus told us that [Luke 14: 34-35]. But what does it mean? Salt is spread on a molecular level throughout a dish. Clumps of salt ruin the cooking. It needs to be thinly, yet completely spread throughout the food.

In like manner, God has His people spread throughout the world. All of us have responsibilities for our own areas. If we do our job as salt, all the people within our responsibility will hear the Gospel and be enabled to make their choice whether or not to serve the Lord.

Remember, we cannot force anyone to believe. Constantine tried that and look how that worked. All he succeeded in doing was creating a powerless, institutional church. That seemed to be the end of what we now call the Biblical church or first century Christianity. Truly powerful groups moved to the edge of the institutional church.

But we can allow God to work through us so all under our care have a clear choice to make. Plus we can lead by

example to give them a wonderfully compelling image of Jesus whom they can choose to serve.

Verse 2:5-7

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

I'm not sure why Paul feels compelled to reiterate this type of statement so often. This is the second time in this letter so far—and we're just into the letter by five paragraphs. It's easy to read more into it than there probably is, but from our modern perspective he protests too much.

In several translations, verses five and six are laid out as poetry expressing the belief that these verses are a common set of verses for the day or maybe a song.

Verse 2:8

I desire that men in every place should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or controversy

Much has been made about the need for men to lift their hands when they pray. As far as I can tell this was the custom of the day and never required.

The truth is that holy hands are a “part of a whole” type of statement. It is not that hands can be holy, but that holy hands can only be found on a holy person. We must remember that we are holy people. Our very names, saints, means holy people.

What is a holy person?

First we need to define holy? There is much confusion here. A common definition is “set apart”; as in a holy altar or a holy bible. But a different word is used here. This is

not *hagios*, which is best translated morally pure. The word here is *hosios*, which means: undefiled by sin, free from wickedness, religiously observing every moral obligation, pure holy, pious (according to the Greek Lexicon).

This is a typically Jewish way of looking at things. Jews were expected to be free from sin. They ignored the fact that this is impossible to do by following the Law. However, as believers born from above, it is an accurate statement of our status in the kingdom before God.

What does this mean on a practical level?

It assumes that before we pray we have confessed and repented of all known sin. Before we pray we should ask the Holy Spirit to show us any sin in our lives of which we need to repent. This is what we are responsible for on any given day.

I do not want to hear about how all people are filthy sinners. Of course this is true—or at least it was. That is no longer true for we believers, except temporarily. When we have repented of all sin in our lives that we know about, we are then sin-free. The Lord forgives us and forgets about the sin. Scripture clearly says this.

Those who have been born of God do not sin,
because God's seed abides in them; they cannot sin,
because they have been born of God. [1 JOHN 3:9 NRSV]

This is talking about choosing to sin or continuously sinning. Of course, maybe the most powerful argument is Jesus' word to the woman caught in adultery, "Go and sin no more." Would he ask something that was impossible? Is He that mean? I don't think so. It is true that Jesus' victory on the cross is what makes it possible. It is true that it is impossible without the Holy Spirit within to empower us. It is true that we will almost certainly slip and fall. But we

can get up immediately, confess, repent, and we are sin-free again!

Is there unknown sin?

How can we repent of something of which we do not know? We can't. How can we be held responsible for sins we know nothing of? We can't.

However, we are responsible to diligently seek and ask the Holy Spirit to search our hearts to reveal any sin in our lives. If He does not reveal anything—then we are free to live as righteous children of our Messiah, the King of kings and Lord of lords. We are only responsible to deal with the sins the Holy Spirit has revealed to us.

But we cannot deny we have sinned and that we sin no longer only by the grace of God. Scripture clearly tells us that also, so we are forewarned.

If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts. [1 JOHN 1:8–10 NLT]

The 'fessed up & clean assumption

This verse (1 Tim 2:8) simply assumes that we enter into prayer cleaned up and holy. This means that we have cleaned up our relationships with our brothers and sisters, that we are not wasting our time in arguments and controversy, and that we have asked the Holy Spirit to show us what to work on today. Whether you lift your hands or not, it's the heart attitude that matters when we pray. It's very straight forward.

Dealing with societal customs

Here we enter the area of the slippery slope. It is obvious that much of what Paul tells Timothy in these letters is Paul's personal opinion based on societal norms. It is not the purpose of this book to enter into that debate. Jesus told us that he desired mercy—we should be merciful. The operative scripture, as far as I can tell is as follows.

There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. For you are all one in Jesus. Our Messiah. [GALATIANS 3:28]

The entire letter to the Galatians is an argument for freedom from the Law, societal norms, and anything other than the lordship of Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. However, it may be a uniquely American thing to be able to step outside the cultural baggage and let people worship freely as their conscience dictates.

It is a dangerous, slippery slope. We see this in the fact that gay activists use societal norms to argue that their lifestyle is really OK. But that is not our argument here. My point is that we are not bound by the customs of the world. We do not have to do anything just because everyone else is doing it. Our sole standard is simple:

Did the Lord give you permission?

We must follow the leading of the Lord by His Spirit. When He calls we answer with a heart-felt, "Yes, sir!" For many of these issues, the answer is that it simply does not matter to the Lord. It's a matter of style. It is not sin. So do not make a big deal about it. If it's sin, don't do it.

This is the basic answer about the need to raise your hands when you pray. History tells us that this was Jewish custom. It is no longer binding on us (but still a good idea). If it helps you worship, by all means do it.

Verse 2:9-10

Women should dress themselves in respectable clothing, with modesty and self-control—not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with the appropriate attractiveness for godly women—the doing of good works.

This is equally true of modern men! The current cacophony of male popinjays strutting around like mutated peacocks is an abomination also.

What a can of worms this is today. Women's clothing today is often just desperately sexual. There is good advice here, but it is so colored by the fact that Paul was never married. He obviously does not understand women at all.

The New Living Translation calls for “decent and appropriate” clothing. The point is obvious. Throwing your sexuality in the face of anyone other than your husband or wife is not good—by any standard. No modest, Godly woman would even consider that. But Paul is truly missing the major point which was made by Peter in one of his letters.

Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair, and by wearing gold ornaments or fine clothing; rather, let your adornment be the inner self with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God's sight. [1 PETER 3:3-4 NRSV]

Good works is so external. True beauty for women is found in their character. If they resort to sexual attractiveness, what do they do when that passes away as they mature (if they ever do)?

But then, neither apostle mentions the true attractiveness of a woman who loves, honors, and respects her husband. That's what a man of God responds to.

Verse 2:11

Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. [NKJV]

Silence is a bad translation here. According to the lexicon the word *hesuchia* means: quietness; a description of the life of one who stays at home doing her own work, and does not officiously meddle with the affairs of others. That's a bit different than being silent as in shut up.

Submission is the word *hupotage* which means subordination. The verb form *hupotasso* is a term of military ranking—to rank under.

We need to remember that women at this time were property with no rights. They could not even be witnesses in court—legally they were not really a person. The common phrase we use is a second-class citizen. So, to someone like Paul who had never lived in union with a woman, his attitude is not surprising.

But even here, all he is saying is that a woman should be quietly obedient learning what she is taught. The same can be said for a man also. This is the best way to be a trouble-free student of any teacher. But then the male Jewish tradition is loud wrangling and nitpicking about the Law. I have a much larger problem with that.

If we say, and I do, that an excellent leader looks for the best, brightest and most responsive people to help him or her; this leader wants feedback, ideas, options, and so on. The leader is responsible for the final decision, but he or she desperately needs all the feedback and input possible to make the best decision.

The same is true in a teaching relationship. My best students were the ones able to ask the tough questions that I really had to strain a little to answer. I certainly was not and am not looking for docile, groveling students, I consider them a waste of time.

So, in my opinion after years of study and experience, verse eleven is less a prescription for womanly behavior than it is a demonstration of a teacher's inadequacies. This demonstration is highly constrained by the social customs of the day. There is no reason to mention the gender of the student and it is not relevant.

However, in that culture it may well have been necessary. We can make guesses, but we need to be able to apply these principles to ourselves in this day and age. The question for us is more like: "How does this apply to us today?" Our society allows and expects much more freedom than was allowed in Paul's day.

Our society is reaping the confusion that applies to the current roles of gender. What is clear is that the old "women as property" model is not Godly.

Verse 2:12

I do not permit a woman to teach or to usurp authority over a man, but to be silent. [MEV]

Here the phraseology gives him away. This says nothing about the Lord not allowing women to teach or exercise authority—this is Paul and his cultural bias.

The normal roles of men and women

This is my opinion based on years of experience and countless hours of prayer and study. Remember, I am married to a woman with a clear pastoral calling. I believe I have the mind of the Lord here, but you need to pray about it and discern for yourself. I do fully realize that we are all different and that the Lord is not bound by normals in any way. You may well have a calling on your life that requires you to step outside these norms. But they are the exceptions that prove the rule.

Normally men are given the role of responsibility

This is not because they are superior but rather because they are so inadequate in this role that they can more easily realize their need and turn toward dependence on the Holy Spirit. Most men will do almost anything to avoid responsibility until they mature. That rarely happens before they reach thirty years old and in truth rarely happens at all in America today.

Only in the Lord does a man become willing to do what the Lord has called him to do without (sometimes brutal) dictatorial tactics, passive/aggressive opting out of action, and similar bad choices. Often men just bail from responsibility by getting into sports, hunting, fishing, and so on. It's not fear of commitment but a strong culturally developed abhorrence of responsibility.

Natural leaders are rare. Even then men are beset by feelings of inadequacy. They need strokes. The best sources of those strokes are the Lord and a man's wife. Anything else tends to cause pride issues and ego problems—or temptations toward sin.

Normally women are given the role of helpmate

This is not because they are inferior but because they normally tend to be responsible and therefore have a hard time relying on the Lord in that regard. It is necessary for mothering. Women will naturally tend to fill responsibility vacuums, but they commonly have a hard time trusting leadership and serving.

Though it is hard to get a woman to admit this in public, many women are very pleased to follow a man whom they can completely trust. Such men are extremely rare—if they exist at all. The only valid person who is trustworthy is the triune God: Father, Jesus, & Holy Spirit.

The faith walk requires us to be in need

One of the things you have probably noticed is that the Lord regularly puts you in situations where you are inadequate, without resources (other than Him), or just in over your head. This is the normal state of things and you need to relax into the arms of our heavenly father. To walk in faith you need to be in situations where all you can do is trust in the Lord to work things out. When He is the only solution, faith is needed. He will never leave you or forsake you.

This strengthens your faith and builds up your experiential knowledge of the Lord—helping you to know Him better. Most important, you learn that He is trustworthy and will come through for you in all situations if you will relax, trust, and wait for His solution. Trying to solve the problem on your own will most likely bring you more of a mess or a larger problem than you had before.

I am convinced that this is why God requires man to be the responsible, trustworthy leader and woman to be the submissive helpmate.

Good leaders desire strong helpers

Some of the best business advice I ever heard (I can't remember the source) is to always hire people who are better than you are. They not only improve your reputation, but they are essential resources to help you get the projects done that you feel led to undertake.

I've never understood why men are so afraid of strong, opinionated women. Of course, there can be some conflict involved. But if you love her, encourage her input, and make it clear that you are one responsible for the final decision after you receive all of her input, this type of woman is a

wonderful, exciting, truly helpful worker alongside you as you build your career, your family, and your community.

A woman like this thrives under a truly loving husband who treats her like Jesus treats the church—always building her up, helping her develop her skills and position, enabling her to become who God designed her to be. If you think about it at all, we husbands are called to lay down our lives for our wives. We are to present them pure and spotless, perfect and mature to the Kingdom and to the world. If we focus on that, she'll be excited to focus on helping and supporting you with love and respect.

Verse 2:13–15

For God made Adam first, and afterward he made Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived by Satan. The woman was deceived, and sin was the result. But women will be saved through childbearing, assuming they continue to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty. [NLT]

On the surface, this seems to be a purely cultural statement by an unmarried man brought up in a rigidly paternalistic culture who sees women as inferior, dangerous temptations, and property. I must confess that this little three-line argument makes me angry. It has been used by the enemy to abuse women.

However, it's useful in several regards. First, it clearly shows that we need to be careful about taking Paul's statements without careful discernment. Paul is not Jesus. He is not infallible. We also need to be careful that we do not read our own cultural bias into the mix.

Second, I am convinced by my study and life experience that if Adam had led his helpmate into repentance and defended her to the Lord, our Father God would have redeemed her according to her husband's leadership. There

was no reason for Adam to fall into the same sin and he is responsible for allowing it to become what it did in bringing sin into God's creation.

Third, the concept that women are saved through bearing children is clearly a cultural thing—absurd on the face of it. Like men, women are saved by presenting their bodies as a living sacrifice to the Lord Jesus, accepting Jesus as their Messiah, and then walking under the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit. If we accept the statement in this verse, then women who are sterile, injured, who cannot bear children for some physical reason would be damned to hell. That's not the God I serve.

I could see an argument that Adam really made some bad choices leaving the woman defenseless and joining in her sin. He was responsible for her and he is responsible for the entrance of sin into the world. He is responsible for Satan getting the legal control of the kosmos (world system) as he has. A call for a husband to protect and nurture a wife gifted to serve in an office of ministry makes a lot of sense. To write off women as Paul seems to be doing appears to be chauvinistic foolishness, at best.

I Timothy: Chapter 3

Verse 3:1

The saying is trustworthy, “If a man desires the office of an overseer, he desires a noble work.”

Now we get into a religious snarl. It takes real discernment to see how bishops, overseers, elders, and deacons are supposed to fit within the church today. Please just pray that the Lord will show you how your organization fits into these possibilities and leadership styles. I’ve written a book called, “*Should the church be organized?*” that covers this area in detail. But, my wife has convinced me that it is so controversial that it would not be a good thing to publish.

The word used in this verse is *episkopos* which is defined as follows in the Greek lexicon:

✠ an overseer: a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian or superintendent; the superintendent, elder, or overseer of a Christian church

In the modern world this word is used for bishops and administrative heads of congregational groups (normally called denominations). Some churches also use it for head elder. Obviously, this word is where the Episcopal church got its name. There is no hint in scripture that a bishop is necessarily in charge of a denomination or multi-church group. This is a church administrator. It is clearly talking about administrative leadership with no direct mention of a spiritual gifting by Jesus.

Several translations use the word elder here—for good reason. The qualifications read like those for people many churches and denominations would call an elder. So maybe we are better to talk about the overseer as the head elder.

Of course, there is commonly a group of elders running a church—each with defined areas of responsibility.

This overseer has no defined place in the list of giftings given to us as the Body of Christ and listed in Ephesians: apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher. This has become a problem in the modern church. Established churches rarely have any ability or inclination to call or ordain people with the giftings listed in Ephesians 4.

People with any of these gifted callings may also have the ability to be an overseer. However, it is important to realize that this is not necessarily true.

The gifted often make lousy administrators

It is truly rare for an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher to also be an excellent administrator. Administrative duties are normally a diversion from the calling at best. The five offices from Ephesians are desperately needed in the church today, but sadly many of the gifted leave the ministry because they are burned out by administrative duties. The gifts are spiritual offices.

There are some biblical models for giftings to also have administrative appointments. The most famous and well known is the calling of Peter as an apostle and Jesus' appointment of him as the head of the new church. The fact that this is possible does not mean that it was common. There is no indication, for example the Paul was ever in an oversight position. He appointed many elders, but he never identified himself as one of them. Peter was another story.

Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you... [1 PETER 5:1 NRSV]

Peter calls himself a presbuteros. The following verse has caused many arguments, but Peter was in fact one of

the elders of the Jerusalem church. He was also clearly an apostle as one of the original twelve.

I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. [Matthew 16:18 NASB]

Most of us would say that this rock was Pete's faith not his administrative position. In addition, it can be argued easily that Jesus called Peter as a pastor.

When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you."

"Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him. Jesus repeated the question: "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you."

"Then take care of my sheep," Jesus said. A third time he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep. [JOHN 21: 15-17 NLT]

We can quibble about the exact nature of Peter's callings and appointments, but one thing is absolutely clear. Peter had multiple giftings and appointments. To put it another way, Peter's apostolic calling had many giftings and responsibilities woven into it.

Unlike Peter, most believers' callings are more limited. Those who are gifted are commonly saddled with administrative duties that make the exercise of their gifting almost impossible. A gifted counselor, teacher, preacher, respected role model for youth, worship leader, and the like are often less than capable of bookkeeping, committee leading, human resource delegation, and other such management duties.

It takes a wise administrative leader to understand how to deal with a member with an obvious gifting. Often sup-

port services should be set up to enable those who need to be protected from administrative duties—to keep them ministering powerfully & effectively.

Only in a larger ministry can those duties be delegated. Those who are gifted administrators are often burdened with expectations of fully creative, gifted ministry which they are also unable to fulfill. Most churches have no idea that they need to separate the two categories of leadership. When was the last time you heard these two categories discussed in your church?

James O. Davis, Global Pastors Network, has stated that: “1,600 pastors in churches in the United States quit or resign from their jobs every month; nearly 20 percent of pastors suffer stress or burnout; 50 percent of pastors become divorced.” There are probably many reasons for these ministers leaving, including disrespect and dishonor from congregations, pressure on families, temptations from the enemy, immaturity, and more. Of course, he did not define what he meant by pastor. Plus, we have no idea how many of these people are truly gifted as a pastor.

It is not important to have an accurate statistic. What is important is to realize the waste of talent and gifts this represents. We need both administrative elder/overseers and those Jesus puts in full-time gifted ministry—plus all the various combinations thereof. More than that, each type of leader needs to understand that the other kinds exist and that they have different needs. Leadership personnel need to be able to support each other.

Overseers rarely have gifted offices

As we look around the church today we can easily see that administrators almost never have the calling as apostle or prophet, rarely as evangelist. However, they regularly

have a gifting as a pastor or teacher. We cannot judge another person's gifting, but simply looking at the fruit of their ministry tells us a lot. Is Jesus proclaimed and are the lives of the sheep transformed?

The only problem with this state of affairs are the expectations. A church can be well led by a talented administrator who is quickly drawn in over his or her head by the expectations of the congregation. Administrators are commonly expected to function as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, AND teachers.

In huge numbers, the mainline churches are cared for by what my wife has always called *the professional holy person*. This person does all the religious stuff for the rest of the people in the congregation.

This person is called a priest, pastor, father, dean, abbot, and many other names. The fact is that they are almost entirely appointed leaders, subject to these qualifications listed in I Timothy 3. Very few have any gifting to an office of the five listed in Ephesians. That type of gifting is virtually unknown in the mainline churches. In fact, these giftings are becoming increasingly rare in this modern, post-Christian era of America. Pray that the Lord will raise up more gifted people to help us.

What is a mainline church?

It has many definitions. For our purposes here in this book, I will use a much broader definition than is normally used. For me, a mainline church is any church that has become self-sustaining in organizational structure. The special calling of an apostle or the directed, specific messages of a prophet usually have no place in such a structure. Even gifted preachers called to proclaim the Good

News are often too radical for such an organization. There is little room for a true calling from the Lord.

Self-sustaining organizations

In most religious groups direct, personal engagement with the Lord almost always steps outside the bounds of religious policy very quickly. Jesus was [and is] always in trouble with religion. In fact, it is not far wrong to say that religion killed Jesus.

To cover the reasons why this is true I suggest you get a copy of Watchman Nee's *Love Not the World*. In this marvelous book, he discusses what happens when a true ministry of God, started by an apostle and led directly by the person called by God to lead it, continues on after the death of the leader.

This problem has been exacerbated by the growth of corporate ministries. Corporations step entirely outside the idea of God calling a person by replacing the person with a group who is actually legal fiction. Nee's point is that any ministry which can survive and stand on its own without God quickly loses all contact with God.

Corporations are not real people and are designed specifically to stand on their own perpetually. Nee believed (as do I) that once the original leader called by God goes home, the ministry begun by that leader should be shut down.

Watchman believed [and I agree] that any ministry which can survive and thrive without the direct daily need of the anointing and intervention of the Holy Spirit has become religious as opposed to being a part of the Kingdom.

If I remember accurately (though this may be my experience speaking now nearly forty years after I read the book), the distinction is made by comparing an organism

whose life flows from the vine and an self-sustaining organization. The Kingdom is an organism. The visible church in buildings is made of thousands of organizations.

Organizations do not need God and have no direct contact with God as a group unless there is a godly person in charge who has been called to that position by God himself. Ministries in the kingdom are not led by committees, but by apostles [people called and sent by God to start a work] or more rarely prophets, evangelists, pastors, or teachers. As mentioned, I believe that most ministries should be shut down when the person with the vision goes home to be with the Lord.

Obviously, this calls into question the viability of denominations and helps explain why mainline churches and long-existing denominations, in particular, are usually lifeless. For example, Luther and Wesley were radical believers filled with life. That life barely lasted two generations in most cases. Only when God calls and sends an apostle to head up an existing congregation of a denominational church does one come to life. But sadly, even then, many denominations regularly rip the leadership from a lively church and move it elsewhere. The conscious plan, believe it or not, is that believers should not become attached to a local leader. How could a denomination retain control in that case?

Almost all denominations are self-sustaining

A very short, partial listing of church organizations that fit this definition would be: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Congregationalist, Foursquare, Assembly of God, Vineyard, Southern Baptist, Congregationalists, and many more. The list would include any church that is part of an organization or is an organization that is self-sustaining and has

survived the death or the absence of the original gifted person who founded the group.

I could easily use a specific church group as an example. There were several that grew out of the Jesus People movement of the 60s and 70s. Originally, what are now networks, multiple campuses, and denominations began as a growing organism out of a ministry founded by an apostle, prophet, or evangelist. Once the original leader died, the church he or she founded (and the churches birthed out of that original church) settled into a self-sustaining mode of existence. Many of them still look for people who are gifted to start new churches in their network. But the original anointing of the apostle is gone and the new network has become a denominational organization that is slowly sliding into mainline status.

This is not evil—it just is. God has provided a way to deal with this issue. Suffice it to say that there are hundreds of thousands if not millions of people in churches as members with false, non-biblically supported expectations. Moving these people into true transformational belief often requires radical organizational surgery.

Overseers watch the practical needs of the local church

Overseers are the ones charged with the day-to-day work and business of the ministry. As you will see in the verses that follow next, there is no mention of spiritual leadership, no talk of pastoral care, no inclusion of vision. They are in charge of the people caring for buildings, the people distributing food and help to the needy, the people involved in presenting worship services and media opportunities, the people keeping track of the finances, the people doing visitations, and so on.

The dictionary tells us that an overseer is a supervisor or a manager. In a book like this about godly leadership, we would seem to be saying that these overseers are the leadership of the church or ministry. But that is not really true. In some ways, what we are talking about here is the difference between a CEO, chief executive officer, and a COO, chief operations officer.

However, do not be confused by corporate lingo. To give a worldly example as a metaphor, Steve Jobs was always the apostle of Apple Computers. He had many positions there. But he was the keeper of the vision—the person who determined the direction of the company. He served that function, even when he was not working for Apple (when he was off starting Pixar, for example). The problem is determining who is the spiritual authority who sent Steve.

Jesus' five giftings have charge of the vision

Overseers are vitally important to a ministry of any kind. But it is important to be sure that you understand that, as general policy, an overseer should not be given any authority over the vision and direction of the church. That task is reserved for the five gifts to the church listed in Ephesians 4. Hopefully, you have an apostle to turn to. If not you'll need a person gifted as a prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher.

The Lord has convinced me that the true leader of a ministry must be Jesus working through one of the five gifted offices—hopefully an apostle. This is what the giftings are all about—allowing Jesus to work freely by His Holy Spirit. We do not need people leading us. We need people who serve us by seeking for and asking for the presence of the Lord in our midst corporately and individually—those

who allow Jesus and the Holy Spirit to minister to us through the leadership.

Extra-local or ministry within the community

An additional confusion about these things hinges on yet another aspect of the gifted. Who are they called to serve? A friend of mine who is an evangelist has consistently felt called to minister to the entire world. I believe my ministry is to America. Most pastors feel the call to minister to the sheep they are given by the Lord. But the same type of gifting also applies to a person who feels called to begin a ministry within a specific local church submitted to the local leadership of that church. There are also those with interdenominational giftings to a town, city, county, metropolitan area, and so on.

Apostles are hard to find in existing ministries which have changed leadership over the years. But then, in many cases, there is good reason to suggest that those ministries should have been shut down when the original apostle left or died. If the ministry is still needed it probably should be re-configured with a new apostle or it will lose its transformational power becoming merely a good works service. This usually calls for radical organizational surgery.

Job qualifications of an overseer

Verse 3:2–7

Now an overseer must be above reproach, married to only one wife, moderate in opinion, sensible, respectable, hospitable, a good teacher, with no drinking problem, gentle and patient, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children in their appropriate place and respectful in every way— for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can

he take care of God's church? He must not be a recently reborn believer, or he may be inflated with pride and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must have a good report with outsiders, so that he may not fall victim to attacks using shame and disgrace that can be part of a devil's snare.

The gender here is male. That is the norm for the same reason that God makes men the head of a Family. But it is merely cultural bias to assume that women cannot be called to this type of work. I have known many women with a true calling and many more who were simple usurpers of authority (often in the absence of a man willing to take on the responsibility). But then I have known many men who were usurpers of authority also. They defined their own calling and the Lord had nothing to do with it.

What matters is the calling—is it from the Lord Jesus? If it is not, the sex of the person does not matter. If it is, the sex of the person is immaterial. What counts is the ability to humble one's self and step out of the way to allow the Lord Jesus through his Holy Spirit to minister freely.

What we are given here are the qualifications for a very trustworthy individual. This is a adult of maturity, stability, and respectability. This type of person is a manager of people, who has their respect, and who can be trusted to do what is required for the group as a whole.

This person will not bring trouble or controversy. He or she lives as a good example to the other people of the group, ministry, or church. Good, solid advice comes from people like this, and this is the type of person needed for leadership in the church.

Yes, the gifted need to meet these criteria also to be effective in their callings. But in this passage we are talking

about something different—an elder. A gifted person may be very young and very immature. The overseer must be an elder.

No spiritual qualifications here

Again, we need to notice specifically that nothing is said here about spiritual qualifications. There is nothing about doctrines, spiritual gifts, public speaking, or presentation abilities. There is nothing about skill in prayer, spiritual warfare, or any of the works expected of a leader.

In modern terms, this person is middle and upper level management. This is not the keeper of the vision, but the one who implements policy set by the leader gifted with the vision and direction.

A person like this can be trusted with the finances, to keep the buildings leak-proof, heated and cooled, to hire competent like-minded people, and all the other things necessary in the day-to-day operations of a large group of people. This type of person takes the entire weight of management off the shoulders of the gifted leader sent by God.

Overseers usurping authority

One of the major issues in the church today are elders who feel compelled to keep the gifted leader in line. Part of the problem is that these elders often called the leader themselves with little concern about who the Lord wanted in the position. Another scenario has elders forced into this leadership position by gifted leaders who betray their calling, fall into sin, and destroy the confidence in godly leadership.

Obviously, this can become very confusing in a church where the gifted leader is titled the head elder. Again the issue is simple: who has the vision? We are not talking about a corporate mission statement here. This vision is what

the Lord Jesus has told the leader will be the focus of the church. He will tell us who he wants as our target audience.

Sometimes the Lord tells the leader directly—sometimes judgments are made based on who shows up. Obviously, this is a problem for an administrative elder with no experience in hearing from the Lord directly. Making decisions based on who shows up is very dangerous because it is so difficult to tell who sent the people. It requires the gift of discernment.

The enemy can destroy a church by sending very needy people who have nothing to do with your mission from the Lord. In my wife's work in Albuquerque, the creep attacked the ministry financially by sending in many of the professional con artists pretending to be needy street people whose real specialty was ripping off Christian ministries. The Lord quickly dealt with her about this issue and she was given the grace to solve the problem in love.

Commonly, elders individually have very limited areas of responsibility. These elders normally do not have an overall vision for the church as a whole. For example, one elder may have the responsibility for the facility, the physical buildings. But you must not make mission decisions based on architecture or the limitations of a specific building. You make architectural decisions based on the vision. Helping the very needy is a very good thing, but it is a rare church (like the Salvation Army, for example) who is asked by the Lord to make these very needy people to focus of the church and the center of the vision for the entire denomination.

These issues are why discipleship gets so few resources. Discipleship does not effect the bottom line. So, in churches run by elders with no gifting, the concern for the bottom

line eliminates any concern for things outside of that—like discipleship, evangelism, and the like.

It remains surprising to me how many churches feel like they can avoid the process of discipleship entirely in favor of a massive giving program. There seems to be no understanding that an excellent discipleship program will naturally spawn giving as much as focusing on orchard husbandry produces superior fruit—both in quality and quantity. But that takes the vision of the gifted with their spiritual focus on the edification of the Body (as opposed to the building up of the church organization itself).

Gifted leaders avoiding delegation

The opposite problem is commonly at the core of “pastor burnout”. This is the inability of the gifted leader to give up control over the small details that really have nothing to do with his or her calling. Some of the things are obvious nitpicking: like vetoing flower arrangements and Christmas decorations. Some are more serious: like trying to control the ushers, the janitors, the secretaries, the audio-visual technicians, and so on. All of these people are rightfully led by a manager or overseer. When the evangelist, prophet, or apostle gets involved in these daily processes, it is often a waste of time and resources, at best.

Job qualifications of a servant-minister

Verse 3:8–13

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not deceitful. They can't be addicted to much wine or questionable finances. They must be committed to our mysterious faith with a clear conscience. Men must be thoroughly examined and determined to be beyond reproach before they are allowed to

serve as deacons. Women must likewise be dignified, temperate, not slanderers, and faithful in all things.

Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. For those who minister well obtain for themselves an honorable position and great confidence in the faith found within Jesus our Messiah.

Here we have a real problem in word definitions. The word used is *diakonos*. The lexicon defines it this way: one who executes the commands of another, a servant, an attendant, a minister

Again here we have no spiritual qualifications listed. The characteristics seem to be the same as those for overseers without the requirement for age and maturity implied the overseer specs.

My belief is that deacons can be either spiritual or natural servants. Their duties depend entirely upon the person calling them. For example, I think it could reasonably be said that Timothy was a minister for Paul.

If you want a real eye-opening study, search out where *diakonos*, *diakonia*, and the other nouns and verbs based in this word are used. Jesus, for example in Matthew and Luke, when talking about leaders in the kingdom said they must be servants of all. The word used is *diakonos* or *diakonia*.

I see no problem with a gifted pastor, focused on counseling, who appoints ministers (deacons) to help him or her in the work with spiritual duties only. Most churches use this title for helpers to overseers. But it is not required by the grammar or specifically stated to have this limitation. The word is actually used for a huge variety of people. Look up servant, slave, minister and deacon. The English word

deacon is used here in the translations and nowhere else. I think we really need to review how we look at deacons.

Again, almost all translations keep the male focus (out of cultural habit, I suspect). Scripture mentions female deacons. The word in verse eleven is simply women (not specifically wives). The same word is used as wives but not as often. We are dealing with translator bias here. Take a look at the verse below. Though most translations say servant here, the word is deacon: *diakonos*.

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon
of the church in Cenchreae. [ROMANS 16:1 NIV]

It is obvious that for both overseers and ministers, there has been a problem with men having more than one wife. The call here is clearly to monogamy. It is specifically mentioned in both lists of qualifications. Women apparently do not have the same problem or it would be mentioned.

One role of a deacon/minister is clear. However, the word deacon is not used in any of the translations. We see it in the Acts of the Apostles. When the gifted become overwhelmed with administrative responsibilities, they appoint deacons to take care of the need.

Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word." What they said pleased the whole community, and

they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. [Acts 6:1-6 nrsv]

It is interesting that we call these men deacons though the word is used in none of the translations. However, the word used for serve or wait on tables is *diakoneo*. This is what a deacon is—a server, a minister. Modern American usage barely remembers that the word minister simply means server and comes from the word used for deacon.

This passage is also the main scriptural justification for democratic voting—though it is hard to fit democratic processes into theocratic leadership. If we look at it, the apostles asked for input from the people. A wise thing to do. The danger comes in allowing popularity to pick ministers or to determine policy.

The twelve asked the whole community of disciples to pick seven men with the qualifications we see here in Timothy. Once these men were picked, the apostles appointed them to their task by praying and laying on of hands. In this case, they ratified the choices made with no changes. But the actual appointments were made by the gifted leaders. This is appropriate.

Another interesting aspect of this appointment is that Stephen was also given powerful spiritual gifts in addition to his call as a minister. It says in verse 8 that he was performing great signs and wonders. In verse 10 after a bunch of troublemakers were arguing with Stephen in verse 9, scripture says they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Holy Spirit in Stephen.

Power is not limited to the gifted leaders

It is important that you realize that all believers are called to minister in the gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. These works of power are normal for any and all believers. These gifts are all “worked by the Holy Spirit who distributes them as He wills”. These gifts are completely separate from the five giftings we have been talking about in Ephesians 4.

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are giftings from Jesus for spiritual leadership to help bring the Body of Christ to maturity. The gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 are part of the tools given to all of us for use in our daily living and social interactions. These daily gifts vary according to need. Any of us can manifest any of the nine gifts listed. The five giftings are a permanent call to a specific individual.

Limiting appointments causes problems

One of the real issues with leadership in the church today is the tendency to put people into boxes and not allow them to grow and flourish as God develops them further. For example, a deacon is a servant. That is the meaning of the word deacon and minister.

Now it is true that Jesus told us that we are all servants and that the chief among us must be the servant of all. But we all know that this is not the way it works in the church today. It didn't work this way in the Acts of the Apostles. We quickly notice that two of the seven appointed as the first deacons quickly outgrew their original job classification—Stephen and Philip.

We've already talked about Stephen. As you know, he ended up the first martyr. The end of chapter 6, chapter

7, and the beginning of chapter 8 in Acts is all about the final end of his life. Clearly his gifting went far beyond what the church considers the diaconate.

In Chapter 8 we see how Phillip's ministry also went far beyond his original calling to wait on tables. After the scattering caused by Saul's persecution of the church, Philip seems to have developed into a preacher with what appears to be the gifting of evangelist. In fact, he is called Phillip the Evangelist in Acts 21:8.

There were some issues at first as Philip seemingly was not leading the newly saved into the fullness of the Holy Spirit. This probably has to do with the fact that ministers are not necessarily mature, fully trained, or experienced. It may also be simply that it was not part of his gifting. We mentioned earlier about how good it is to have traveling evangelists work within local churches to provide the backup work after the evangelist brings in the new converts. In this case the apostles had to come from Jerusalem to bring the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and deal with other things.

But there was no conflict and the apostles headed back to Jerusalem while Phillip continued preaching with signs and wonders and amazing miracles. In fact, Philip is recorded with a teleportation miracle where he is instantly transported from the Judean wilderness to the Mediterranean coast after baptizing the eunuch.

When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea. [ACTS 8:39-40 NRSV]

Earlier in Chapter 8, the story says that Phillip found the eunuch on the desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza. Azotus is on the coast road, nearly 20 miles north of Gaza.

My point in all of this is that we need to be careful not to restrict the giftings of men and women called into administrative positions. I have served in mainline churches where Philip would have been tossed out or shut down because he overstepped his authority. In fact, my father was shut down for similar infractions.

A few years back, we finally left a mainline bishop-led denominational church when the elders (who were democratically elected and named “the council”) rose up to force out the pastor because he was trying to lead the congregation back into a more biblical position in several key areas like evangelism and spiritual growth.

This type of situation is epidemic in congregational churches where the people honestly believe it is their church. They believe they own it. Of course, if it is theirs—it cannot be the Lord’s. I hope you understand that by now. If humans demand to lead and govern without the Lord, He will simply leave and let them do it. Then you are left with a social club.

Verse 3:14–16

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth. Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion: He (God) was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations,

believed on in the world,
taken up in glory. [RSV]

This seems to be chatty filler, but Paul's concern for his son in the Lord is clear. For some reason Paul believed that Timothy needed reminders and encouragement. Maybe it was his first work in one of the gifted ministries without the support of Paul with him. If we understand correctly, Timothy's life was spent in helping Paul in his mission. Maybe this was the first time he had been on his own as a leader. In a bit we see that some saw Timothy as too young.

It was probably simple politeness in conversational style. I'm not trying to diminish the weightiness of this creedal statement. It could even be a song lyric. But, as with all creeds, the likelihood is that Paul knew that Timothy had it memorized. So it was just a religious reminder of what they were doing and what they had been through. I think it is likely that it covered a common shared memory or religious practice.

A comment from Tom Shanklin,
one of my proofers

"How one ought to behave oneself in the church. That's major, because the way someone behaves may effect someone's salvation. If they are causing offense, someone may end up in hell. Paul is emphasizing the importance of the church as the very foundation of truth in the earth, and therefore how important it is for people to behave."

I Timothy: Chapter 4

Verse 4:1-5

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared with a hot iron. They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by God's word and by prayer. [NRSV]

Marriage has not been forbidden yet, although it does call into question the Roman style of priesthood. We have seen all the trouble that can cause. This is a pretty strong indictment of vegetarianism or the vegan lifestyle. Don't get me wrong, it does not bother me if you avoid animal protein (though I have strong questions about something like soybeans that birds refuse to eat in the field).

It does raise questions about groups like the Shakers. But that again is not for me to judge. They serve another, not me. Their walk with the Lord is between them and the Lord Jesus.

This does give us ground to not worry about a lot of things others worry about. If God created it, thank Him for it and it is fine to use—as long as it is legal and you can eat or use it with a free conscience.

Verse 4:6

If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. [NKJV]

Evidently, Timothy was dealing with apostates who had wandered into strange stuff—forbidding marriage and making some foods unacceptable. It appears that Paul was dealing with actual problems Timothy was facing.

Verse 4:7–10

Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives' tales. Instead, train yourself to be godly. "Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come." This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it. This is why we work hard and continue to struggle, for our hope is in the living God, who is the Savior of all people and particularly of all believers. [NLT]

One of the ways the enemy tries to thwart our ministry and render the church useless in the world is by getting us to waste time wrangling over worldly ideas. Some of these can appear pretty spiritual. Our position is clear—because we have the benefit of a resource that Timothy did not have—the New Testament. If it is not covered by scripture, you do not have to believe it.

There are many practices that fall under this. Things like being slain in the spirit are not worth arguing about. It doesn't matter whether you believe that the bread and wine become the literal body and blood of Jesus after consecration or not. Apostolic succession is only vaguely scriptural. An altar call may be led by the Holy Spirit or it may be dead religion, but it is certainly not worth an argument and it is certainly not mentioned in scripture. The Rapture's scriptural basis can be easily questioned, but it is a waste of time to debate it—we won't know until it happens. As it happens, a pre-tribulation Rapture can be easily proven, biblically.

Physical training

I don't practice this, but I have no problem if you do—UNLESS it becomes the narcissistic center of your life. There are many reasons why this might be a good thing, but doing it to be sexy for strangers in your old age is ridiculous and quite possibly sinful. I won't even get into the stupidity of an old man wanting his wife to look like a teenager. It's disrespectful to the woman of your youth and simply avoids the reality of a mature love which is so much more satisfying than the physical cravings of youth.

If the Lord leads you to train physically—go for it. He may do that with me some day. But it is not important compared to training for godliness.

Godly training

On the other hand, this needs to be the center of our lives as believers. There are many things you need to be doing. Let's mention a few of them:

✚ **Reading scripture:** Increasingly we find that simply reading scripture like a well-loved novel has great benefit. It is literally feeding your soul with raw materials for the Holy Spirit to use in your life.

I've gone so far as to buy a Bible that is designed for reading, with no red for the words of Jesus. They are relatively hard to find. But I have found a new joy in simply reading scripture daily without studying or getting distracted.

✚ **Studying scripture:** This takes the raw food received in your simple reading and makes it into a meal. As we ask the Lord to show us what to study, we come to know Him better, we get direct guidance with solutions for our daily problems and issues that we face. We get instruction in how to live, what to do, how to react, and so on.

- ✚ **Constant prayer:** I do not have much use for formalized ritualized prayer. It needs to be a constant, ongoing conversation with your Lord. You should be praying about everything. I talk with the Lord all day long.
- ✚ **Thanksgiving:** God deserves it and you need to remind yourself about all the things He does for you.
- ✚ **Praise him in the midst of trouble and trial:** There is great power found in praising Him when trials strike. First, He inhabits the praises of His people. Second, it makes the enemy really angry and frustrated. Third, it reminds you of the truth of the Gospel.
- ✚ **Find fellowship:** You need a place where you can get serious help: prayer, testimony, bible study, accountability, and so on. Most churches do not provide this anymore. So, you may well have to look outside your church or start a group.
- ✚ **Find someone to mentor or disciple:** One of the best ways to grow is to be responsible for the growth and well-being of someone else. Teaching is the best way to learn.
- ✚ **Do good for others:** Don't take the world's advice on this. Ask the Lord what he wants you to do and who to do it for. He's the only one who knows what is really good for a particular person. Handouts can really hurt a person who needs to learn to be self-reliant—trusting the Lord for his or her daily bread, for example.

All of these things can easily be recommended—BUT—you must seek the Lord on what he has for your personal program of godly training. He has one that will work the best for you—helping you to grow the most quickly and making your life fruitful.

Verses 4:11–12

Command and teach these things. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity. [MEV]

The wisdom of age

According to tradition, Timothy died at 80 years old in 97 ad. Taking the common understanding of when Paul's letter was written—from Macedonia in 65 ad, this would make Timothy around 48 years old when Paul wrote this letter to him. As far as elders are concerned, this is quite young. We need to deal with the perverted slant our youth culture has on these things. It is a very recent cultural perversion and has no part on the truth.

I'm fond of telling people that I have learned more since I turned fifty than I did in the first 50 years—and that is the truth. I didn't even start writing or designing fonts until I was 50 years old. It was only as I approached fifty that I knew enough to apply what I knew to the Christian life.

By the time you hit fifty you should be mature enough to begin being a good example to youth in their twenties and thirties. I have been taught and my experience proves that men in the USA normally do not begin to mature and take responsibility until they are 28 to 30 years old.

Increasingly I see the importance of living your life as an example to those the Lord gives you to be with in this life. This is the only form of discipleship that really works. Discipleship from youngers (people under fifty) is often problematic as they do not have enough experience.

Verse 4:13

Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. [NASB]

This is one of the areas where traditional mainline churches have a real leg up on Pentecostal, charismatic, or non-denominational churches. There is more scripture read every Sunday in an Episcopal church than most modern churches have read publicly in a year.

This verse gives preachers and teachers a good general guideline for content of public preaching and teaching. The only problem here is that there is a large benefit to the reader also. In all but the most traditional mainline churches (with lay readers), only the preacher or teacher ever reads scripture publicly. Spreading out the wealth by having others read is good.

Verse 4:14

Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy, with the laying on of hands by the elders. [NCV]

My guess is that this is one of the giftings of Ephesians 4 we have been talking about. Paul never tells us what that gift was. It is interesting to Google around and see all the people who are certain they have it figured out. None of them agree. Here we had gifted elders who allowed the Lord to speak through them and tell Timothy what his gifting was. It'll be fun to ask him when I see him.

Verse 4:15-16

Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. [NASB]

Some scriptures say meditate, some say put into practice, NLT says to give your complete attention to these matters. It's important! We all, and leaders especially, must

watch these things closely, meditate (mull over and think about), practice, be concerned about, focus on, and make all of these matters the center of our life in the Messiah.

The reason is two-fold. First we will ensure our own salvation. It does take work to make these things real. It is true that we cannot do it without the power of the Holy Spirit. But it is equally true that salvation is available to those who persevere, press on, remain steadfast, abide in the Lord, and allow the Holy Spirit to work freely in their lives.

Remember the words of Jesus when talking about this walk in the Lord:

You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it. [MATTHEW 7:13-14 NLT]

But equally important to a leader who leads by example (as we are supposed to do), the sheep placed in our care find their salvation as they watch us and emulate us. What a frightful responsibility. We need to fervently pray for the grace of God to be enabled to do this for those whom we love and serve.

I Timothy: Chapter 5

Verse 5:1-2

Do not rebuke an elder, but exhort him as a father, the younger men as brothers, the elder women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, with complete purity. [MEV]

We are to treat the brothers and sisters as family. In our experience, brothers and sisters in the Lord are much closer than blood kin. But for many, blood relatives are the standard by which personal relationships are judged. Of course, this is much more difficult to understand with our modern dysfunctional families

On an interesting side note, the word used here for both older man and older woman is presbuteros. This is the word used for elder. We'll talk about this word more in a bit. I must assume that the translators know something that I do not, but it certainly seems possible that Paul is telling Timothy how to relate to elders (male & female) and the rest of the flock he's been assigned to minister to.

Verse 5:3

Treat widows well and care for them that are true widows

You need to know a little something of the Jewish culture here. Women were second-class citizens—akin to slaves (property). They had no income, no work, could not inherit, were not allowed in society like men. A widow was destitute—a street person, if she had no family to care for her. This is why the story of Jesus raising from the dead the son of the widow of Nain [Luke 7:11-17] is so poignant and powerful.

On some history site I found the following: “Only Greek wives were citizens with the right to vote. They had a lim-

ited right to own property apart from their dowry. Macedonian women fared better... In Thessalonica... women were given inheritable civic rights.

In Rome, the authority of the father was paramount. A Roman girl was “sold” in name into the hands of her future husband. Both daughters and sons were educated, boys until the age of seventeen, girls until thirteen when they were expected to marry. A Roman woman couldn’t conduct business in her own name, but could enlist the help of a male relative or friend who served as her agent. Women did have inheritance rights and the right to divorce. Roman women were not permitted to vote or hold public office.”

David W. Lloyd said this about widows in the day of Jesus: “In Jesus’ time, Jewish widows had no right of inheritance, which made them unique in the Mediterranean world. If a widow had no children, she could return to her father’s home, at least if her father was a priest, and she could remarry her late husband’s brother. If she had a son, the son was expected to support her. Not only did a Jewish widow have no economic standing, she had no social standing, either. If a man died before old age, it was widely believed that this was God’s judgment for some grave sin he must have committed, and that disgrace carried over to his widow. It was also easy to tell which women were widows; widows who followed Mosaic Law strictly wore clothing that identified them as widows. This combination of economic and social inferiority for widows created a climate in which they were easily exploited, and some of the prophets’ most strident condemnations of injustice used the mistreatment of widows as an example. (We’ve read of) Jesus’ denunciation of the religious hypocrites who have everyone’s respect while they deprive widows. Moreover,

even if they were not oppressed, they were not valued. The prominent teachers of the Torah were seen as an asset to the synagogue, but poor widows were seen as burdens.”

True widows, as far as Paul is talking about here were women whose father was dead and who had no male children to care for them. Outside of Jewish society, women were treated a little better, but they still rarely had an inheritance. They needed help and continuing care.

Verse 5:4-7

But if she has children or grandchildren, their first responsibility is to show godliness at home and repay their parents by taking care of them. This is something that pleases God. Now a true widow, a woman who is truly alone in this world, has placed her hope in God. She prays night and day, asking God for his help. But the widow who lives only for pleasure is spiritually dead even while she lives. Give these instructions to the church so that no one will be open to criticism. [NLT]

There are a couple of things here that are interesting. First, Paul makes it clear that children or grandchildren are responsible to care for her if they exist.

The second issue is not so clear. The widow living for pleasure is left up in the air. I assume the church is still to help. But they should have no illusions about her spiritual welfare, and should treat her as a non-believer unless the Holy Spirit leads differently. If they love her, they may be able to lead her to the Lord. But contrary to modern liberal thought, Paul does not say to put her on the support list.

Verse 5:8

Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. [NIV]

This could not be more clear. We are required to care for our relatives and household.

Verse 5:9-9-10

No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the Lord's people, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds. [NIV]

Evidently Paul is talking about a problem in the early church that is much like our problems with the homeless and street persons in America in the new millennium. I've mentioned the problem we had when my wife started her church in the 1990s. Professional street persons were attacking our ministry financially. These people were on the street by choice because they could make so much money.

Albuquerque has a large problem with these people due to the mild winters. We had a leader of one of the rescue missions come to us and explain reality. The panhandlers on the corner with the "work for food" signs, would usually refuse to work for food. They were making \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year tax free by playing on hurried people's guilt.

There were also huge numbers of people who played the churches for cash. The final straw that made it clear for our work was when a man came in and stole the mission money off the altar. When I caught him at it and asked what he was doing, he replied. "It's mine. I'm a mission." He wasn't crazy or sick. He was a professional thief.

There are certainly churches and ministries called to work with these people. You need to make sure that you are one of them. Otherwise, the enemy can shut you down.

It certainly appears that Paul was familiar with a similar problem. Look at the restrictions he places the requirements for a widow to be served. Rules like that are a record of problems. It makes us realize that our issue with the street persons was not unusual and that we were right in implementing loving policies to deal with them. (We developed a relationship with several of the rescue missions in the city and sent people to them.)

Verse 5:11–16

As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list. For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry. Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge. Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also busybodies who talk nonsense, saying things they ought not to. So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan. 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. [NIV]

This is all cultural beliefs for that day. Widows were evidently expected to pledge themselves to Jesus—almost like nuns, it seems. Some women had obviously developed ministries to care for widows out of love and compassion. It does not apply to us other than being an example of how to deal with an administrative problem in our ministries. There is no counsel for how to care for divorcees—that is a recent epidemic modern Americans deal with.

Verse 5:17–20

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.” Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. [ESV]

It is clear that there were elders who didn't rule well or this would not be an issue. Equally obvious is the fact that only some worked as preachers and teachers. Here we come to the most common word used for elder: *presbuteros*. The Vine's dictionary defines it this way:

in the Christian churches, those who, being raised up and qualified by the work of the Holy Spirit, were appointed to have the spiritual care of, and to exercise oversight over, the churches. To these the term “bishops,” *episkopoi*, or “overseers,” is applied

The lexicon adds that the terms overseer, bishop, and elder were used interchangeably. What is interesting here is that Timothy's authority over the elders seems to be clearly implied by this passage. This is one of the arguments for my contention that the Ephesians 4 gifted ministries which are extra-local have supervisory responsibilities over and for the local church elders.

Verse 5:21

I command you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality. [MEV]

One of the things we all learn very quickly is that prejudging is foolish and that partiality is evil. The reasons for

this are obvious when you look at it closely. I have found that many of my prejudgments turned out to have been attacks from the enemy trying to keep me from association with another believer. Any partiality is based on my flesh and old self. We need to be very careful to look to the Lord for discernment in all of these areas.

Verse 5:22

Do not lay on hands quickly or join in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

There are two things about laying on of hands. The first concerns appointing or ordaining elders and ministers. Here we need to take our time and get the confirmation needed for such a serious decision.

The second involves spiritual danger. If you lay hands on a person possessed, you can pick up a demon. It is simple to protect yourself, but you should be aware that this is a possibility. The story is told that this is how Jim Jones got in so much trouble, ending with the Kool-Aid deaths.

As for joining in the sins of others: you may not be sinning yourself, but as my wife's grandmother used to tell her. "If you play in the coal bin, you'll get dirty." Again, the operative rule is clear. Do not be around sinners as they sin unless the Holy Spirit has clearly told you to be there to minister to the sinners.

We cannot live in the world without living among sinners. So, we need to be praying for protection, wisdom, boldness, and so on. We do need to remember that we are in enemy-held territory. We are at war. We are not fighting people but demonic powers.

We need to keep ourselves pure and holy to receive the help we need as quickly and easily as possible. Sin in

our lives compromises our communication with the Lord. If you do not recognize the danger of that—we need to have a talk.

Verse 5:23

Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses. [NIV]

This little verse tells us a lot. First of all, it answers teetotalers. I've heard people say stupid things like "Jesus used grape juice and never drank wine." My reply is usually something like, "Well, praise the Lord. I always wondered who invented the refrigerator." But then I have problems with cynicism and sarcasm.

Secondly, it clearly shows us that portions of this letter are purely cultural. This is a letter from a loving spiritual father to his spiritual son. He offers the best advice he has. This is not a direct command that we should all have a little wine every day (though it may work for us as it may have worked for Timothy). This is medical wisdom from the day that probably worked. It's not a commandment.

Verse 5:24

The sins of some are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not obvious cannot remain hidden forever. [NIV]

Simple proverbial wisdom backed up by many scriptures in Psalms and Proverbs, especially. This type of understanding is difficult for the young. But it is simple reality to those of us who have been around for awhile. It is really an indictment of snap judgments and moving too quickly. Many things become clear when you give them enough time to develop.

I Timothy: Chapter 6

Verse 6:1-2

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. 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. [NIV]

Where is Paul's outrage over slavery? There is none! Why?

Slavery is always with us. In Paul's day it was normal. It is part of the sinful condition of the world. In America, we volunteer for our slavery and call it employment.

The key is that we are called to serve our masters well. Peter goes much further into this in 1 Peter 2:13-25. It is not a sin to be a slave, nor is it a sin to be a master. If I had to buy someone to protect them from a bad situation, I would certainly do so. I would treat my slaves well and set them free if possible. But the act of purchasing a slave is not the problem. The problem is the evil in the kosmos. This evil leads to thinking we can own another person plus mistreat them.

In America, we had black people as slaves. But in the history of the world many other races have been enslaved. The Jews were slaves in Egypt for 400 years. The problem is evil as said before. The severe mistreatment of slaves is evil. A well-treated slave is better off than a minimum wage-worker. Many wage slaves are treated very badly. The lack of love is the issue here.

I can certainly see buying a 12 year old girl enslaved in the sex trade in Moldova or Thailand to set her free from her masters there. However, to set her free in the same place would put her back at their mercy. Make sure you judge situations rightly and do what is best for the people to whom you are ministering.

What matters is simple. If you are a master, treat your slaves well. If you are an employer treat your employees as if they were your brothers and sisters. If you are a slave treat your masters well and with respect. If you are an employee, treat your employer as you would the Lord. Of course, freedom is better—but it is not always possible. What matters is how you treat others.

Verse 6:3-5

Anyone who teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to godly doctrine is conceited and knows nothing. He has a morbid disposition for controversy and verbal disputes, from which come envy, strife, blasphemies, evil speculations, constant disputes by men of corrupt minds, being destitute of the truth, and supposing that financial gain is godliness. Withdraw yourself from such men. [MEV]

There are many people like this. I used to be one of them. Thank God He has and is changing me.

Again we look for fruit. If the fruit is envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people there is a serious problem. It is one of the real warning signs. It is in the list of the seven things the Lord hates which Solomon gave us in Proverbs 6:16-19.

There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to

run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers. [ESV]

Our goal is to build up the Body of Christ into maturity. This is the reason Jesus gave us the five giftings in Ephesians 4 that we have talked about so much.

Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. [EPHESIANS 4:12-13 NLT]

You can see why the Lord hates the items on the list of seven. As leaders, one of the responsibilities is to be aware of these things and stop them as they occur—for they will.

Godliness as a means of gain

This is the current American Gospel. If we sow good seed, we will be blessed. If we give a lot, God will give us a lot. If we help people, God will help us. You know the drill. If we are obedient, God is required to bless us materially. To support this, we get a flood of scriptures from Deuteronomy, Psalms, and Proverbs. Very quickly our poor deluded brothers and sisters are doing the legalistic walk of works instead of the loving walk in the Holy Spirit.

Beware of ministries who teach prosperity as our birthright in the Kingdom. While it is true, it is not our goal. It is never to be our focus. Our focus is to know the Lord and to allow ourselves to be changed into His likeness. Our goal has to be to follow His lead and steadfastly move toward the goal of transparently showing forth the life of Jesus within us. Jesus is who matters. He will take care of the rest.

Verse 6:6–8

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. If we have food and clothing, we shall be content with these things. [mev]

And where are Americans with this? Watch HGTV where all new homeowners demand massive kitchens with granite counters and 200 square foot closets to hold their clothes. Obviously, this is not the norm, but it is certainly commonplace in this day and age.

We forget how perverse a society is, which is governed by satisfying fleshly desires. Where is the concern for holiness, godliness, peace, joy, kindness, and love? Who would think that contentment is found here? How many on television (except for those weirdos who watch Christian TV and only some of those programs) are calling their audience to a life of service and holiness?

How do we measure success? The only true measure is that we know the Lord intimately and make it into the presence of the Lord at the end of the age. Our relationships are all we can take with us when we go.

Fleshly life is a terminal condition. Your flesh is dying and your life on this earth in your body is going to end. The only thing you can take with you are your spiritual relationships and experiences.

Verses 6:9–10

Those who want to get rich fall into a tempting trap with many foolish and harmful lusts which plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for riches have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

This is a real area of problem for Americans. We actually believe we are poor if we don't each have a car, a luxurious home, a large flat screen, a smart phone, and so on. There is nothing wrong with these things. But do not fall in love with your material possessions. Keep your mind on Jesus and His call on your life.

It is true that He wants to bless you and may give you material blessings. But they are never the goal. You are never to love them or put them before the Lord.

Verses 6:11

But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. [NLT]

So, the truth is that Jesus will bless you materially if you give up all these things to pursue Him and His righteousness. He does need to determine if you can be trusted with material riches. Many can not. All of these things are tools to be used in a godly life of love serving the people the Lord sends you to help.

Verse 6:12

Fight the good fight of trusting the Lord and taking possession of the eternal life to which God has invited you, which you have declared openly and beautifully before many witnesses.

You are in a battle. The enemy is real. It will always be a fight of trust and faith. Satan and his minions will do everything they can to get you distracted and defenseless. If they can get you to lay down your armor in tiredness or weakness or stupidity, they will have no qualms in taking advantage of any opening you give them. Their only rules are to steal, kill, and destroy you in any way possible.

The Lord will protect you if you allow him. But you can suffer a lot of grief if you allow that. God will not force his protection upon you. You have to take it and put it on like strong armor in a vicious battle for your life.

The bottom line is: be strong in the Lord and his mighty power. Put on all the armor God gives you so that you will be enabled to stand without wavering against all the schemes of the devil. For we are not fighting against people, but against the evil leadership of the kosmos, against strong powers working in darkness, against evil spirits in spiritual realms. Therefore, put on every piece of armor given by God so you will be able to resist the enemy in the evil time that befalls you. Then after the battle you will still be established and unwavering. [EPHESIANS 6:10-13]

Verse 6:13-14

And I order you before God, who gives life to all, and before Jesus our Messiah, who spoke out the good confession before Pontius Pilate, to obey this command unsullied not open to censure until our Lord Jesus the Messiah comes again.

Paul is giving Timothy a solid commandment. We don't tend to like the concept of commandments any more, but they are a good thing when coming from our spiritual leaders. They give us something to hang on to and a focus for our walk in the Lord.

Here we see good, godly leadership in action. Evidently Paul felt it necessary to give Timothy a strong focus. It seems obvious that the Ephesian church was full of soul-ish Christians who spent a lot of effort in worldly matters. Ephesus was rich, with a lot of shopping and entertainment. It was full of pagan spirituality. It was an urban place of material plenty. The very name *Ephesos* means *desirable*.

Its people were accustomed to refinement and ease. It was a financial and artistic center of the Roman Empire.

Paul knew the city well. He had lived and taught there for at least three years. He knew Timothy—his strengths and weaknesses. So, this command was not made lightly, but because the Holy Spirit convinced him it was necessary.

Verses 6:15–16

For at just the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only Almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords. He alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him. No human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will. All honor and power to him forever! Amen. [NLT]

This reads like a standard saying. It seems to be the type of thing like we say at Easter: “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again”. Paul is again reminding Timothy of his spiritual roots before he goes back to dealing with the rich materialism of the Ephesians.

Verses 6:17–19

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. [NASB]

The rich are to use their wealth to bless—focusing on being guided by the Lord to truly do things that will be useful to the Lord in building up his Kingdom. Our blessings and eternal life come from our intimate relationship with the Lord. Using our resources wisely under the direction of the Lord will bring us closer to the Lord. It will

also teach us how to hear Him speaking to us. Here we find eternal life.

Verses 6:20–21

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding ungodly chit chat and the opposition of science (that so-called deeper knowledge)—this skill which some have proclaimed and thereby fallen into error. Grace be with you.

There is nothing wrong with science. What is wrong is when people start looking to it for their salvation. The basic sin is looking to the creation rather than the creator. Science has the same basic flaw as the occult. It is looking elsewhere for knowledge, wisdom, and guidance. God never says that the occult does not have power. He says that it is forbidden because the source is evil.

Science in its purest form does not have this problem. In fact, many of the truly inspired scientific breakthroughs came by inspiration to strong Christians. My father, who was a mechanical engineer, made a serious study of this issue finding that most truly honest scientists ended up in belief discovering that creation is impossible without a creator. Scientific breakthroughs were almost entirely labeled inspiration and the scientist could not explain where the knowledge really came from. We know where it comes from, Science confirms the glory of God, who truly created it all.

Almost everyone wants deeper special knowledge that gives them a superior standing. We must constantly fight against this puffery. Paul says in another place that knowledge puffs up whereas love builds up [1 CORINTHIANS 8:1]. The Greek word for this special knowledge was *gnosis*. The people pursuing this were called Gnostics. This was the first major

heresy of the church. Here is a link if you want to study this out a little.

<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/gnostics.html>

Or you can simply Google gnosticism. It is still a very common problem within the church. The solution is to get people afflicted with this sin (or disease) to repent of it. Get them focused on Jesus. He is our knowledge and wisdom. Beware of people who tell you that they have wisdom to impart to you.

The second letter to Timothy

Here's Alec Barber's comments from www.agabus.co.uk:

"The two letters from Paul to Timothy are not alike. Paul sent 1 Timothy and Titus to Timothy and Titus, but the message of these letters was to the churches. This second letter really is to Paul's friend Timothy. In the first letter, Paul writes mainly about the church at Ephesus and the work that Timothy has to do there. In the second letter, Paul writes more about himself and his own problems. In the first letter, Paul tells Timothy to stay in Ephesus and to work there. In the second letter Paul asks Timothy to come to him in Rome as quickly as he can.

"Paul wrote the second letter from Rome perhaps a year after the first letter. This was in 64 A.D. or a year or two later. Paul is in prison in Rome. Winter is not far off. Winter in Rome is sometimes very cold. Paul had been a prisoner in Rome from about 60-62 A.D., but then he was able to live in his own rooms. Paul was a Roman citizen, so he would not be in the worst part of the prison where slaves would be kept.

"Paul wrote his letter to the Romans in 57 A.D. We can see from the last chapter of that letter that by then there were...many Jewish Christians in Rome. Yet Paul found that there was a need to preach the Good News to the Jews in Rome (Acts 28:17-28). This was in 60 A.D. Paul must have had many good friends in Rome. He left Rome in 62 A.D. In 64 A.D. the Roman emperor, Nero, killed great numbers of Christians in Rome. Many of the friends Paul had made in Rome would have died then. By the time Paul came back to Rome, he was a prisoner of the Romans and the Christians in Rome were few and very frightened. So Paul was lonely in Rome."

As far as I know this is accurate history. Regardless, this is a much more personal letter than either 1 Timothy or Titus.

II Timothy, Chapter 1

Verse 1:1

This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I have been sent out to tell others about the life he has promised through faith in Christ Jesus. [NLT]

Even for this personal letter to his spiritual son, Paul starts with his credentials. Either Paul was very insecure (possible) or this was standard practice when using a scribe to write down your letter (more likely).

Verse 1:2

To Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. [NASB]

Hi Tim,

A standardized form of greeting.

Verses 1:3-4

I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience as my forefathers did, as I continually remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, remembering your tears, that I may be filled with joy, [MEV]

He really misses Timothy, thinks and prays about him constantly, and longs to see him.

Verse 1:5

I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you. [NLT]

Paul is building Timothy up by recalling the heritage he had from his mother and grandmother. He is pumping Timothy up a little. I don't know about you, but this type of phraseology is very familiar. It is preparatory verbiage to

soften the blow that is surely coming next. We can almost hear the loud, BUT!

Verses 1:6

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. [NIV]

Here's the general rebuke—soft and gentle. No one knows what the gift is. Some guess preaching—but that is never listed as a gift. The word gift is not in Paul's list of the five offices in Ephesians 4 (except in the Amplified). The other place gifts are listed is in Romans 12.

But the fact remains that we have no real clue what the gift was. The tone is interesting. Paul seems to be concerned about a real problem he has heard about and he believes that Timothy needs a gentle rebuke.

Verse 1:7

For God has not given us a timid spirit, but of a spirit of miraculous power, agape love, and a sound mind.

This certainly sounds like the description of the Holy Spirit. The Lord is meek and humble but He is certainly not timid or fearful. In our day to day world, where the Lord's dealings with us are so gentle, we need to be reminded that within us is the Holy Spirit of God Almighty. Within us is the Spirit that opened the Red Sea, carved the words on the tablets of stone, knocked down the walls of Jericho, stopped the sun in the sky, and much more.

Fear is not from the spirit within. It is from our flesh or the enemy. There is no other source. If we are feeling timid, we can rest assured that this is not a gift of the spirit of God. Are we supposed to be aggressive and obnoxious? Of course not! But we can assume that the power of Almighty God is within us and available whenever we need it. The

fruit of the Holy Spirit is within us. All we need to do is ask and allow that fruit to appear.

Verse 1:8

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but suffer hardship in company with me for the gospel...

Buck up, Bucky! This is what we are called to, son. The Holy Spirit will back you up with the power of God.

Verse 1:9–11

For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News. And God chose me to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of this Good News. [NLT]

It's a scary time. Nero has been doing his worst. Paul has decided that Timothy needs a review. **This is why we are here. Get a grip!** Stand fast—go forward, not back.

Verse 1:12

For these things I suffer, but 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 to Him until that Day. [MEV]

Paul knows he's in prison because of the Gospel, but he has no doubts about the Lord he serves. He doesn't regret his position. He knows that the Lord's plan is good and will turn out for the best. He knew he wouldn't survive this time, but even if he did die he was ready to go home.

In the face of severe trials, he learned that the Lord is trustworthy and true. The Gospel is not just nice words but active power to change people and heal their lives.

Verses 1:13-14

Follow the pattern of sound teaching which you have heard from me in the faith and love that is in Christ Jesus. Guard the treasure that was committed to you through the Holy Spirit who lives in us. [MEV]

Nothing's changed. Keep it up. Guard this truth given us by the Holy Spirit working within us.

Verses 1:15-18

You know that all those who are in Asia have turned away from me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. May the Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. But when he arrived in Rome, he searched me out very diligently and found me. May the Lord grant that he may find mercy from the Lord on that Day. You know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus. [MEV]

Paul is alone. All his friends from back home in what we now call Turkey, Syria, and the Holy Land have given into the fear and left. Onesiphorus had been a great comfort, but he's talking about him in the past tense also.

II Timothy, Chapter 2

Verses 2:1-2

You then, Timothy, my child, be strong in the grace we have in Christ Jesus. You should teach people whom you can trust the things you and many others have heard me say. Then they will be able to teach others. [NCV]

Here's the phrase that should strike our heart: "Teach people whom you can trust". These are the words of men and women under persecution and in danger. Nero was killing people. Boise State University has the following in a longer page on Nero's persecutions:

"Nero performed the worst atrocities upon his victims; he did not just kill Christians, he wanted to make them suffer first. Nero enjoyed dipping the Christians in wax, and impaling them on poles around his palace, he would then light them on fire, and yell: "Now you truly are the light of the world." Nero also performed many other kinds of torture, often killing them in the Circus Maximus in front of large crowds of spectators where he did some of his most gruesome murders. Here he would wrap Christians up in animal skins and throw them to lions, or dogs who would then tear these men and women apart in front of thousands of entertained spectators. At other times he would crucify them, and after the crowd would get bored, he would set the Christians on fire."

These persecutions lasted for years all over the Empire. They continued for several more of the Caesars. It's been apparent for many years that the only thing that will turn the American church around is some persecution. That would surely separate the sheep from the goats. It would certainly get our faith in perspective. But it's increasing, and most are just compromising the message.

Verses 2:3–7

You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things. [NKJV]

Other translations say sharing sufferings and that soldiers do not get involved with civilian affairs. I've always liked the liege lord image better myself. I'm a knight pledged in service to my King—always on-call, 24/7/365. Those are the rules: always on duty, ready at a moment's notice to obey the word of my Lord.

Soldiers in battle are also engaged in this way. The image is one that we need to hold dear. We are at war—constantly. We must always remember this. No vacations, no time off—on duty because we are facing a relentless enemy who does not play fair seeking to steal from us, kill us, and destroy us. The enemy's true hope is to get us at an unguarded moment, trick us into denial, and then kill us before we can be saved.

The following is my opinion. I believe it is true, but you need to pray about it: Being on duty at all times is a serious matter. One of the real problems facing the generation born in the 1970s and the decades following is the idea that they deserve a vacation. They honestly believe that time off is a requirement for living. Cite me chapter and verse, please. There is no scriptural image of a vacation except the sabbath and the Jewish feasts.

This is counterproductive thinking at best. It is dangerous for this attitude does not recognize the realities of war. We get a break when the war is over or when the Commanding Officer says we can. Breaks are short. War is real.

The second problem with current cultural realities (and this started earlier [mid-century maybe] remaining a major problem in our culture today) is the whole concept of play. Biblically there are some real problems here. Play is mentioned in scripture—but never in a positive light. Nowhere does the Bible say that play is good. It only acknowledges that immature children do it.

The only real mention of play as adults is in 1 Corinthians about the event in Exodus 32 where the people had just built the golden calf. There it says,

Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” [1 CORINTHIANS 10:7 ESV]

In fact, play is seen very negatively except for infants and children—where it is given not as a positive thing, but an acceptance of reality. The same is true of hangin’out. In the verse that follows play and hangin’out disappear when things get really bad.

For death has crept in through our windows and has entered our mansions. It has killed off the flower of our youth: Children no longer play in the streets, and young men no longer gather in the squares. [JEREMIAH 9:21 NLT]

This is true, but you’ll look in vain for scripture promoting play and hangin’out as necessary for development. You’re expected to grow beyond this childishness at what we would consider a young age.

It has gotten so bad that we place a high priority on allowing and even teaching children to play. Even beyond

that, men and women are considered children until they get out of school and that is often in their twenties. Even further astray is the value and priority placed on play by men and women who should know better even up unto their forties and fifties. Countless men and women abandon their families to play golf, softball, hang glide, sky dive, and so on.

In the only positive mention of play:
The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there. [ZECHARIAH 8:5 NIV]

The time frame seems clearly to be after the war is over—probably during the Millennium—when life has gotten good again. The tribulation is over. But we are in the midst of the Great Tribulation. However, this prophecy has been fulfilled in modern Jerusalem, now that the Israel is reborn.

Age of accountability

A final concept should be mentioned though modern thought would be appalled at this. In Christian terms this is the age of a person who becomes responsible for their sin. There is no number given to us Biblically. Roman Catholics say 7 years old, Mormons 8 years old. Jews set the age at 13 for boys and 12 for girls. In general, 13 years old is the maximum and 6 or 7 years old is common as historical standards.

So, play should be done by then?

I think so—that's when the warfare begins. But, I'm not calling for rigid nastiness. I'm saying that we do a disservice to our children by not telling them about the realities of the kingdom of God. Let them play, but teach them to work. Only now in my seventies am I beginning to learn the value of discipline and wisdom. I was never taught it

as a child or a youth. Boomers are seriously afflicted with this disease of the flesh. [HERE ENDS THIS OPINION PROCLAMATION]

Verses 2:8–10

Remember Jesus Christ, who was raised from the dead, who is from the family of David. This is the Good News I preach, and I am suffering because of it to the point of being bound with chains like a criminal. But God's teaching is not in chains. So I patiently accept all these troubles so that those whom God has chosen can have the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. With that salvation comes glory that never ends. [NCV]

I may be imprisoned, but the Gospel cannot be hindered by things like this. We put up with a lot in order that the Good News can be proclaimed. One of the least often taught scriptures is found in Corinthians.

In fact, to have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? [1 CORINTHIANS 6:7 NRSV]

You will find that much of your life is controlled by your attitude toward difficulties, hardships, and suffering. We are to overcome evil by doing good [ROMANS 12:21]. Do not waste your time or compromise your witness by fighting and squabbling for your rights. It is better to suffer wrong rather than be known as a fighter, squabbler, or contentious person. What matters is your witness to your neighbor, workmate, and/or companions.

Verses 2:11–13

This is a trustworthy saying:

If we die with him, we will also live with him.

If we endure hardship, we will reign with him.

If we deny him, he will deny us.

If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is. [NLT]

All translations typeset this little passage as a poem, song, or proverb. It reads like responsive verse in a liturgical service. It was obviously part of the core of Christian teaching in that day and age. We need to bring it back.

Try to imagine this as a song being sung in your church. Is this part of the Gospel being preached there? If not—why not?

Verse 2:14

Remind them of this, and warn them before God that they are to avoid wrangling over words, which does no good but only ruins those who are listening. [NRSV]

One of the major things the enemy has used to compromise our work in the 20th century and today is denominationalism. If you look at this issue closely, you'll find that it is all about wrangling over words. Interdenominational squabbling has replaced ministry in many cases. Thankfully, a lot of this is going away as we reach 2020.

You need to be clear about these things. No denomination has all the truth. There is only one Body of Christ. We need to get our focus on things that matter. Paul is telling Timothy to take care of this issue—now. Obviously, the problem remains. It is part of our fleshly nature. It needs to be stomped out.

We must clearly understand that these disputes are a waste of time at best. In reality, they seriously compromise our witness and injure those who are forced to watch us in our immaturity.

Verse 2:15

Study to show yourself approved by God, a workman who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. [MEV]

Though it is true that I cannot do this except by the power of the Holy Spirit, I must make it my conscious goal.

This is true for all believers—no matter what their position is within the church or Body of Christ.

We need to do our best. We need to seek God for help in this regard. The main thing is to keep our focus on the important things of this life. Presenting ourselves as approved is often not what people expect. This is the importance of the scripture in Matthew:

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. [NIV]

The key to the abundant life we all want is to seek Him first and His righteousness. We must do our best to present ourselves at the judgment seat of the Messiah approved by the Lord, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” But we must rely on the Holy Spirit.

Another part of this is that we need to be rightly explaining the word of truth. We cannot do this unless we study the scriptures. In them we find a written standard to help us discern the truth in all situations. Our opinions do not matter, but God’s written word does.

Verse 2:16–18

Avoid worthless, foolish talk that only leads to more godless behavior. This kind of talk spreads like cancer, as in the case of Hymenaeus and Philetus. They have left the path of truth, claiming that the resurrection of the dead has already occurred; in this way, they have turned some people away from the faith. [NLT]

Here we see the birth of a heresy, at the very least. Remember, a heretic is still a believer but he or she has false doctrine mixed with his or her beliefs. The problem is that we all have false doctrine that we hold to be true. So are we all heretics? I suspect that this is only an issue for teachers—part of that responsibility teachers carry as stewards of the good news.

Part of the job of leadership is to nip heresy in the bud as Paul is doing here, and he is calling Timothy to deal with it in the congregation to which he is responsible. Paul is very concerned with heresy and uses it in this manner:

Paul ranks “heresies” with crimes and seditions (Gal 5:20). This word also denotes divisions or schisms in the church (1 Cor 11:19). In Titus 3:10 a “heretical person” is one who follows his own self-willed “questions,” and who is to be avoided. Heresies thus came to signify self-chosen doctrines not emanating from God (2 Pet 2:1). [EASTON'S BIBLE DICTIONARY]

I have to be very careful with this. As you have seen, many of my opinions are outside the mainstream. I share them because I believe they have value in teaching us to think about scripture using the brain God gave us to know Him better. However, I do not present them as doctrine.

The first criteria: Is it Biblical?

In this day and age of bombardment by teachers at church, online, on TV, satellite, and cable, we need to be very careful who we listen to. I have covered this many times already, but it serves us well to review this again. If a teaching is not biblical, you can probably safely disregard it.

On the other hand, biblical teaching is not to be received without discernment either. This goes both ways. Some of the strangest people are strong servants of the King. Some of the most popular are heretics and maybe even apostate. Some of the most apparently powerful have the backing of the enemy and not the Messiah. You need to seek the Lord and pray for discernment. He will clearly show you the truth.

Verse 2:19

But God's truth stands firm like a foundation stone with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and "All who belong to the Lord must purify themselves (allowing God to make them Holy)."

To deal with heresy you must know these two things—among many others

✚ We cannot judge His people: Only the Lord knows who are really His. If they are His, He is the judge of them. They do not work for us.

As we talked about in *Learning to Walk in Freedom*, we must be fruit inspectors. Paul is even more clear about this issue in his discussion of judgment and discernment in 1 Corinthians.

The spiritual man judges all things, but himself is judged by no one. [1 Corinthians 2:15]

The word used here is *anakrino* not *krino*. *Krino* means to pronounce judgment. *Anakrino* is closer to discern. The lexicon says *anakrino* means:

to investigate, examine, enquire into, scrutinize, sift, question
to judge of, estimate, determine (the excellence or defects of any person or thing)

According to Paul, we are to be doing this all time with everyone. We are not pronouncing judgment, but discerning the truth about what they say and do. We must determine if they are fellow believers or not. We do not want to get ourselves in a position of casting pearls before swine [Matthew 7:6]—nor do we want to miss an opportunity to witness to what God has done in our lives.

Our focus must be on the second scripture quoted (probably Isaiah 52:11). Our holiness is something we can work on. Though we need to discern the people around us—

so we can help them, teach and comfort them, we cannot change them. Only the Holy Spirit can do that.

✚ So, our task is to purify ourselves: to present ourselves as a living sacrifice [Romans 12:1]; put off the old person we were before we were born of God, and put on the new creation in Jesus our Messiah [Ephesians 4:22-24].

Verses 2:20-21

In a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also those of wood and clay; some are for honor, and some for dishonor. 21 One who cleanses himself from these things will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, fit for the Master's use, and prepared for every good work. [MEV]

Here's a little allegory further explaining what we've been talking about. Get yourself straight and cleaned up so you will be ready for the Lord to use. If he needs you in a time of crisis, there will not be time to get yourself in shape—if you have put off or avoided God's correction. You need to be ready—cleaned up and ready to go wherever he heads.

Verses 2:22

Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts. [NLT]

Again, I find it interesting that a man who was probably in his late forties is considered youthful in that culture. But I have had a major revelation in the past couple of decades: I now consider people in their forties, and even fifties, youths and probably immature, but this is unusual today. It was a strong cultural norm in their day. Timothy was not considered old enough to really be an elder. And, Paul obviously considers men in their forties to be easily

swayed by the lusts of the flesh. My experience is that this is a real problem today also.

Verse 2:23

But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. [NASB]

The Amplified version expands this to “trifling (ill-informed, unedifying, stupid) controversies over ignorant questionings”, but we all know what the real problem is, right? How do we determine what is trifling, stupid, uninformed, ignorant, and the like? The answer is the same old one: very carefully.

This is one of the main reasons why we must study the scriptures widely and carefully. This is why we need to pray about everything. This is why we need to spend a lot of time learning to hear from the Lord. If we do this faithfully, He will show us what is to be avoided.

This is a serious problem for a person like me who believes he is called to teach. You need to be careful also.

I've shared before, for example, how my wife (in her calling as pastor) refused to allow me to teach prophecy in our church. All she saw were arguments about speculations. The studies always turned ugly. Indeed, the Lord has told us that no one knows the day or the hour [Mark 13:32]. He has told me specifically that no one has it figured out. So, all teaching on the end times is speculation—informed or not.

However, that did not stop me from writing my novel, *The Righteous Perish*. It laid out a very unusual scenario that fulfilled all the scriptures as far as I can tell. I believe the Lord wanted me to write that. He does not give me license to teach that fiction as doctrine.

The basic principle is clear. If you are not sure whether a conversation is edifying, change the subject. If that is not

possible, excuse yourself. If you are a leader with responsibility, lay out the problem and tell your people that this conversation needs to end.

Verse 2:24–26

The slave of the Lord must not be argumentative. He or she must be kind to everyone, inclined and gifted to teach, patient, correcting those opposed to your teaching with gentleness. God might give them repentance so they can come to know the Truth. In this way they may escape from devilish traps, which are holding them captive to do the enemy's will.

Here is the key to teaching. We are to be kind, loving, and gentle—trusting the Holy Spirit to deal with the hearers. We are not responsible for the reactions of those we teach. God has that covered. We are responsible to act like a believer, manifesting the fruit of the Spirit.

Interestingly, the word Paul uses here for the Lord's servant is *doulos*. We've talked about this word before, but a review will not hurt. Here's the definition as it applies to us in these verses:

doulos: a slave; one who gives himself up to another's will; those whose service is used by Christ in extending and advancing his cause among men; one who is devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests

If we are the Lord's minister, we do it His way. Our job is to allow the fruit of the Holy Spirit to be apparent in our lives. Then, as He gives us opportunity, share what we have learned as clearly as possible.

II Timothy, Chapter 3

Verse 3:1

You need to know that in the last days times will be very difficult and dangerous

It is my belief that we are there now. Of course, many people have thought this many times in the past. But the signs of the times seem to be clear and the Lord did say we would recognize the season. The trick is that we do not know how long these last days are going to last.

Verse 3:2-4

(People) will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, slanderers, unrestrained, fierce, despisers of those who are good, traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, [MEV]

When I grew up in the 1950s, none of this was true for anyone. You should look up all these words and make sure you understand what they mean. This is truly the state of America in the new millennium. It seems to be getting worse every day. And it will continue to get worse and worse. The world system [*kosmos*] promotes this aggressively.

Are we actually worse?

I believe we are. Our society is certainly fallen into depravity when compared to what I grew up with in the 1950s. In fact, it has fallen a great deal since I became a believer in the 1970s. Actually, it has gotten much worse since I matured some time in the late 1990s.

The worst part is that this has become our entertainment—or is this the cause of a lot of it? Think about it for a moment. Does not this list sound like the plot lines

for most of the sitcoms, cop shows, and movies you have watched over the past decade? The only saving grace of cop shows is that they show these things as evil, but commonplace in our society. Sitcoms make these evils into humor—a funny thing that people do. Sitcoms showing the father as a buffoon or the mother as a nasty shrew. Stories where everyone in the neighborhood sleeps with everyone else in the neighborhood—and worse. The sheer nastiness of the humor on TV forces me to avoid it almost completely. We used to be able to pass it off as fiction, but now the really bad people have their own reality show. Paul talks about this:

They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too. [ROMANS 1:32]

Verse 3:5

having a form of godliness, but denying its power. Turn away from such people. [MEV]

In southern Minnesota, the main problem seemed to be this last one on the list. They have raised good works and volunteerism to a community lifestyle. The sheer number of churches boggles the mind. Yet there are very few experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit in any real way and the Gospel is rarely preached. Here in New York, godliness simply does not seem to exist on any real level. Holding the form of religion, but denying the power of it

This is as much of these perilous times as the rest of the more obviously evil things seen in the first parts of the list. This is why these last days are so difficult to deal with. Not only is evil readily apparent and experienced daily in our culture, but in addition, huge numbers of people have

convinced themselves that times have changed and values must evolve. We see things like the choir director living with a man and no intention of getting married because it does not make “good tax sense”. They honestly believe that they are doing well. They are good church goers, helping the needy and doing good.

It is hard for us to keep in mind that the doer of good works is often in no better spiritual condition than the mother who drowns her children or the hedonistic pleasure seekers. The only thing that matters is our relationship with Jesus of Nazareth. Do you know him? Do you recognize what he did by hanging on the cross, shedding his blood, and dying for you?

What is this power?

It is not the power of organization or religion. Somehow the idea has come into place where we think that the power of a church is in its ability to provide good works and societal good to its members. We’ve talked before about how we really do not have a clue what good is. But this all missed the point.

This is such an important point that Paul made the following statement.

The kingdom of God is not words or talk. It is miraculous power and mighty works. [1 Corinthians 4:20]

If we have a church that denies miracles and does not exude power, we have a problem. If we have a church focused on growth, how many members they have, and how many people their building will hold, we have a problem. The Greek word used here is *dunamis*. The lexicons give us the following definitions which apply here:

- ✚ inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth
- ✚ power for performing miracles
- ✚ moral power and excellence of soul

So what are we talking about? Miracles are the obvious answer. And it is true that they are exciting. But they are not the goal or the best evidence of power in a church. The New Testament pattern is that the Lord confirmed the work of the apostles with signs and wonders. They were a by product of ministering, a result and after effect. Real power has a long-lasting effect.

One of the things I have learned over years of experience is that what I was told when I first came to the Lord is actually true. The greatest miracle (and one of the most rare) is to see a person totally transformed by the Holy Spirit after entering into a personal relationship with Jesus.

What do we see in modern America? People are rarely transformed. The following quote from The Word of God Unplugged blog in 2006 is revealing.

“Forty-five percent of Americans say they have a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, have confessed their sins and accepted Christ as Savior according to The Barna Group. But even survey author George Barna agrees that not all born again Christians are bearing fruit. What we’re finding is that there is still a lot of superficiality... Barna finds that 36-percent of Americans are what he calls NOTIONAL CHRISTIANS, they describe themselves as Christians but do not meet the born again definition.”

In *Newsweek*, April 2009, the major article for the week was named, *The End of Christian America*. The article itself says that this is not really the truth, but I wonder. I tend to think it is. In the article, it is claimed that a third

of Americans claim to be born again. That's a huge drop from the Barna survey of 2006. If the same percentage applies to those who Barna would describe as actual born again believers applies, that must have dropped from 9% to around 6%. Surveys in 2019 said 7%.

Obviously, we have lost contact with the power of God. But this is nothing new, really. I remember talking to the senior pastor of the largest Foursquare church in New Mexico in the 1990s. We were talking about this issue and I asked him, "How many people in your congregation are completely sold out to Jesus—willing to die for Him?" His congregation at that time was about 600 people attending every Sunday.

His response was what I expected. "Less than a dozen," he said. This has been my experience in every church I have attended for the past four decades. If the percentage holds true, this would be 500 people in a congregation of 25,000. My experience suggests that even this figure is optimistic. The truth is that there are very few people in any church in America manifesting the power of a truly transformed life.

- ✝ How many are there in your church?
- ✝ Are you one of them?
- ✝ If not, why not?

Verse 3:6

These people work their way into people's homes and win the confidence of vulnerable men and women who are burdened with sins and controlled by various lusts.

We must never forget that the enemy sends people to purposely deceive and destroy (if possible) weak, so-called Christians with the form of religion but no power. If a person is not transformed, reborn—a new creature filled

with the Holy Spirit, he or she is still controlled by their flesh and its desires. Such a person is easy prey for the evil we are talking about.

“You deserve a break today.” “I’m worth it.” “Try it, you’ll like it.” All of these common advertising slogans have real and severe consequences in the lives of immature believers and religious people. Unless you are filled with the Holy Spirit and born again, transformed into a new creature, you do not have the power to resist the wiles of the enemy. The only power you have is your own personal will power. As long as will power is directed by the flesh and its desires, people are in serious trouble.

Verse 3:7

These people are forever following new teachings,
but they are never able to understand the truth.

The phrase Paul uses in Ephesians to describe people like this is stark yet it applies to many in our churches.

... children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. [EPHESIANS 4:14 NRSV]

Always a new program, a new book, a new teaching, a new method for building a church... These things are meaningless when compared to the true goal of our lives: knowing Jesus. The truth is that everything proceeds from this knowledge and personal relationship with our Messiah. It’s not about methodology. It’s about a relationship.

As long as you are following teachings and not focused on following the person of Jesus, lord of lords and king of kings, you are in deep trouble. You cannot find the truth by following a teaching. Truth can only be found by repenting from all of these things and falling on your face before Jesus. This is the power to transform. Jesus is the

answer to all of our problems. His love, His life, His power within us is our hope of the life abundant.

Verse 3:8-9

Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so these also resist the truth, men of corrupt minds and worthless concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further, for their folly will be revealed to everyone, as theirs also was. [MEV]

Here we have one of several instances in the New Testament where one of the writers references (what we would consider) extra-biblical knowledge in the scriptures. In this case Jannes and Jambres are not Biblical but come from a targum. A targum is an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew scriptures that added and changed things. They came about in Jesus' day because the people no longer spoke Hebrew.

According to James, Faucett, and Brown these names came from "the unwritten teaching of the Jews" [theodoret]. Regardless, we have Paul using common cultural usage to make a point. That point is pretty severe as Jannes and Jambres were commonly understood to be the magicians who opposed Moses during the early battle of the plagues (before God ramped it up to the place where the magicians could no longer compete [Exodus 8:18-19]).

How do we deal with these evil counterfeits?

There are several things going on here. First, Paul thought (and we know this from several passages) that the last days were upon them already. So, he is talking about people who fit the description of verses 2-5 who were in the church of that day.

The key phrase is found here, "but they won't get very far"

All the various translations make it clear that Paul's attitude was that eventually, before very long, their falsehood would become apparent to all. It is important to notice that Paul does not bother to fight them or call them out. There is nothing about specific teachings or teachers in this particular passage. In fact in verse 2:25 Paul writes:
Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth [NIV].

Peripheral teachers

In my four decades plus of walking with the Lord, I have seen many strange teachings. There was the headship group in the 1970s where people were expected to base all of life's important decisions (such as when to buy houses or cars, when to have children, and even more ridiculous things) on the word of their pastor, shepherd, or overseer. That lasted less than a decade.

Every year we have several teachers whose book or video or conference speaking become the raging fashion in the church. Who remembers Jabez? Sometimes people supposedly worship by barking like dogs (which is not heresy, but certainly silly). Currently we have the new style of contemporary praise that depends on rock'n'roll volume and repetition—which I know works because my acid rock band used it successfully in the psychedelic love-ins of the late 1960s. It is a poor substitute for excellent music and true corporate worship of believers with their God. It won't last.

This week we have a brouhaha about someone who supposedly has promoted the idea that Hell isn't real or some such nonsense. You can be assured that will blow over and disappear quickly because Hell is real—and you do

not want to go there. The point is that fashion will not last and we are not to worry about it. Remember the technique the US Treasury Department uses to teach its agents and other people how to recognize counterfeit money.

They ignore the counterfeit and focus on deep, intimate knowledge of the real thing

When you know the real thing, the false becomes obvious. Our goal must be to share the reality of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. As we show forth who Jesus really is and how knowledge of God is truly appropriated, strange, fashionable teachings will be left behind in the glory of the reality of the Kingdom of God.

Verse 3:10–11

But you have observed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, tolerance, love, patience, persecutions, and afflictions, which came to me at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra—what persecutions I endured! But the Lord delivered me out of them all. [MEV]

This is just a reminder to his friend and disciple about what Paul has gone through.

Verse 3:12

All who are living godly lives in our Messiah Jesus will be persecuted.

Here's a blanket statement not often preached. But it is the truth. The world hates believers. The ungodly will hate you for no reason even if they do not know you—unless the Holy Spirit gives you favor.

More than that, you need to watch your own thoughts. Satan can slip in here in an attempt to get you to persecute someone you don't even know. Many are the times over the years when I found myself disliking a preacher or teacher or co-worker or acquaintance only to find out

that they were a true believer who I loved as I came to know them personally. The enemy will fill our minds with lies—and these are some of the most insidious.

On the other hand, we must be careful to listen to Peter's correction also:

Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world.

So be happy when you are insulted for being a Christian, for then the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you. If you suffer, however, it must not be for murder, stealing, making trouble, or prying into other people's affairs. But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by his name! [NLT]

Notice the little warning in the middle: don't suffer for being a sinner. Persecution for being a schmuck is not cool. This is yet another reason to take your life in Christ seriously and to strive to live a godly life, by grace.

You will be persecuted!



Verse 3:13

But evil people and imposters will just get worse and worse both in deceiving others and in their own personal deception

Again Paul does not talk about fighting the hypocrites. There is a time and a place for that. Remember Elijah's battle against the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18. But people will continue to get worse and worse.

When I was in high school in the late 1950s and early 1960s, our teachers and our principle were constantly telling us how each class was worse than the previous class. We

tend to forget that one of the biggest disciplinary problems in public schools in the 1940s was gum stuck under the desk lids. It ranked even higher than boys pulling girls' pigtails. I think you will agree that problems in schools have gone downhill a little since then.

The problem recently is that these evil people and imposters seem to be embedded into the church leadership of many of the mainline denominations. My best guess is that this is all about the deception talked about by Paul in Thessalonians. He clearly told us that there would be a great falling away at the end and we do seem to be in the middle of that here in America.

This man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles. He will use every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction, because they refuse to love and accept the truth that would save them. So God will cause them to be greatly deceived, and they will believe these lies. Then they will be condemned for enjoying evil rather than believing the truth. [1 THESSALONIANS 2:9-12 NLT]

If you read this passage, you will clearly see that we have a way to go. But, remember no one can believe how fast things are changing. I've been reading David Wilkerson's *Vision*, a prophetic vision given in 1973. It is a dreadful thing, and it is amazing how much of it has been fulfilled already. With the church so powerless, the counterfeit power, signs, and miracles of the Antichrist and his prophet will be overwhelmingly attractive to a world desperate for hope in the ever-increasing chaos.

Verse 3:14-15

But you must continue with the things you have learned and found convincing. You know who taught you. Since childhood you have known the holy scriptures

that help you to be wise in a way that leads to salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. [CEB]

Here we have guidance from a mature man of God. We know who the trustworthy men and women of God have been in our lives. Timothy was taught by his mother and grandmother, as Paul mentioned earlier. We need to remember the people like this in our own lives who have taught us. Most importantly the people who taught us about Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible. We must constantly keep in mind the reliability of the scriptures. We need to fill ourselves with scripture until it becomes a part of our very being. This standard, plus the Holy Spirit, will enable us to stand.

Verse 3:16–17

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man (or woman) of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. [NKJV]

The word used for man of God is *anthropos* meaning human being. But that is a small aside.

We need to understand what Paul was talking about here. Scripture at that point was the Law, the Prophets, plus the Writings (which includes Psalms, Proverbs, and the rest). Many of the commentators state that Paul was also covering the New Testament because most of that was written at the point this letter to Timothy was written.

But there is no way I can believe that Paul, a Jew's Jew would be taking these new Gospels and letters as seriously as Jewish scripture. Plus, he was not a man who would allow people to accept that his letters were scripture. Look

at his reaction in Acts where the people tried to say that he and Silas were Gods. He saw himself as a man like us.

History is filled with examples of the danger and error that results from men declaring that their words are infallible. The same is true of organizations who declare the words of their leadership are equal to scripture. David Koresh comes to mind, but there have been many more.

So, the important thing here is the reminder, by Paul, that what we call the Old Testament is important. I've talked many times about the dangers of ministries who focus too much on the Old Testament and their tendency toward legalism. On the other hand, ministries who ignore the Old Testament can become ungrounded in the history of God's dealings with us.

I separate the three: Old Testament, New Testament, and the Gospels. It is important to keep all three in balance. This is why I still believe that a good worship service will have readings from all three—plus the Psalms (and I would include the Proverbs also).

II Timothy, Chapter Four

Verse 4:1-2

In the presence of God and Jesus the Messiah, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in the light of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly charge you: proclaim the message; persistently keeping your sense of urgency whether it is convenient or not or whether the message is even welcome; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with unending patience and unflagging zeal in teaching.

Paul knows deeply how hard it can be to go on. This walk of faith can become very tiring. Sheep are often completely ungrateful. Positive results are commonly a long time in coming to fruition. The phrase so often repeated in the early portion of Revelation in the messages to the seven churches needs to be remembered here and always:

The one who overcomes will receive the blessing

Some of the reasons for this are seen in the next two verses which surely speak to us today of the modern church in America.

Verse 4:3-4

For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. [NRSV]

This is one of the great issues in the Information Age. There are so many teachers to listen to that it is easy and normal to gravitate toward the ones who do not make you uncomfortable. All of us must guard against this. It is important to keep the entirety of scripture in front of us. It is crucial that we understand the whole counsel of God.

All preachers have one sermon

I cannot tell you where I first heard this, but it is true. Most preachers have one area upon which they focus. This is especially true of teachers and preachers who become satisfied with their spiritual growth and maturity. I have heard preachers where I had received the entirety of their sermon within a month or two. After that, it was all repetition.

As preachers and teachers, we must always be on guard against this so that we can help those put in our charge to grow and mature. As sheep in the local flock, we must be constantly seeking and listening to The Shepherd, Jesus our Messiah, for good pasture. As we follow Him, He will anoint our leaders to give us food. As we walk in the Holy Spirit, we will be led to green pasture that will bring us to maturity.

If your leader never makes you uncomfortable, he or she is not doing the job to which they were called. In many times in our lives we do not need our ears tickled but our bottoms smacked. If you have found a pastor who can keep you challenged and focused on growing in the Lord, you have found a good thing.

Verse 4:5

As for you, keep a clear head, don't let hardship get to you, do the work of an evangelist, and fulfill your ministry.

Paul's reason for writing his beloved disciple in letters one and two is summed up in this sentence.

Verses 4: 6-8

As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits

me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing. [NLT]

I like the Message here.

You take over. I'm about to die, my life an offering on God's altar. This is the only race worth running. I've run hard right to the finish, believed all the way. All that's left now is the shouting—God's applause! Depend on it, he's an honest judge. He'll do right not only by me, but by everyone eager for his coming. [THE MESSAGE]

Several liberties have been taken here. But the core of it is summed up with: You take over. I'm about to die. Paul is passing the torch. I imagine this was really bittersweet for him. He is faced with the truth that the Lord did not come back immediately. But whatever the doubts, he shows none of this to Timothy. There is no lack of faith on his part. As usual, Paul leads by example.

Verses 4:9–22

Hurry to visit me soon. Demas has abandoned me. He fell in love with this present world and went to the city of Thessalonica. Crescens went to the province of Galatia, and Titus went to the province of Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you. He is useful to me in my work. I'm sending Tychicus to the city of Ephesus as my representative.

When you come, bring the warm coat I left with Carpus in the city of Troas. Also bring the scrolls and especially the parchments.

Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will pay him back for what he did.

Watch out for him. He violently opposed what we said.

At my first hearing no one stood up in my defense.

Everyone abandoned me. I pray that it won't be held against them. However, the Lord stood by me and

gave me strength so that I could finish spreading the Good News for all the nations to hear. I was snatched out of a lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from all harm and will take me safely to his heavenly kingdom. Glory belongs to him forever! Amen. Give my greetings to Prisca and Aquila and the family of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed in the city of Corinth and I left Trophimus in the city of Miletus because he was sick. Hurry to visit me before winter comes. Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers and sisters send you greetings. The Lord be with you. His good will be with all of you.

Of course, Paul can't let it lie. He finishes with the news. All the important teaching is completed. We do not know if Timothy made it to be with his mentor before he was finally killed.

Appendix A:

Study tools

Books

- ✚ A readable bible: Because study Bibles are often so hard to read, a good readable bible with minimal footnotes and cross references is highly recommended
- ✚ Several good study Bibles
- ✚ Vine's Expository Dictionary
- ✚ Strong's Concordance
- ✚ Manners & Customs of the Bible
- ✚ Bible Dictionaries
- ✚ Dictionary & Thesaurus

Useful Websites

- ✚ Bible versions: biblegateway.com
- ✚ Strong's Concordance and lexicons: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- ✚ Vine's Expository Dictionary: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- ✚ Maps and much more: <http://www.ebibleteacher.com/imagehtml/ntmaps.html>
- ✚ Roman history: <https://www.unrv.com>

What is a good study bible?

There are several attributes to consider when you buy a study bible. The main thing is to get a book that is comfortable to use at your normal studying location and comfortable to read. A lot of this is personal. For example, I find that single-column Bibles are much easier to use and especially easy to teach from.

WARNING! Many of the new study bibles have so many “helps” that the actual Bible is lost in the clutter. The Bible can’t be read. Often the actual words of the scriptures are left to an inch across the top of the page with six or seven inches of footnotes, commentary, and so on. The typography used for the Bible is often inferior and hard to read in order to make the commentaries more attractive. They are very difficult to use for real study.

- ✚ Leather-bound: nothing else will last long enough. A \$100 leather-bound Bible will last a decade or much more. Bonded leather will last about three years. Hardback, maybe a year and a half. Paperback maybe two years
- ✚ Many cross references
- ✚ Good maps
- ✚ Word definitions: either in the footnotes or built into the cross references
- ✚ Wide margins: for taking notes and adding your personal cross references
- ✚ A translation you trust: You’ll need to pick up many translations and paraphrases, but unless you use them for serious study, they can be paperbacks
- ✚ No denominational slant in the footnotes and commentary: you want clear explanations of the scriptures. You do not want doctrinal slants

Reading Bibles

I was the NRSV XL edition, a two-column square Bible designed for comfortable reading in 2010. It has no cross references or commentary. This is good for me as I am compulsive about studying and am at a place where I just need to read the scriptures in context again. Now in 2020, I have the same in a Modern English Version.

Appendix B: *A brief testimony*

Where it all started

It would be good to say I was raised a Christian but that would not be true. Throughout high school I was heavily involved with our local Episcopal church in Stillwater, Minnesota. I was President of the EYC youth group (I think). My family was a large part of the choir and the choir director was also my choir director at high school. I was a choral singer, took some voice lessons—the whole bit.

But I rejected all that. Never heard about Jesus. I was consumed with anger against the system. You really can't say I was a hippie, because I dropped out before that term was coined. Though I considered myself a fine artist, I had no real talent except for the necessary ego.

I was born again out of a life of fine art, drugs and occult practices on January 15, 1974. At that point, after smoking dope every two hours for the previous seven years and doing hundreds of hits of acid, I was so stoned that it took several days before I even noticed anything. But the transformation by the summer of 1974 was truly astounding. I am not the same man I was—thank God!

Like Saul (though certainly not on his level in any way) I was an enemy of the church. I was even brought in as a guest speaker for church youth groups to preach the glories of LSD and spiritual seeking—though at that time my seeking was all in the occult and Zen.

For the first couple years after giving my life (such as it was) to Jesus, I was trained in the Lord by my father, who was one of the first charismatic Episcopalians—being filled with the Spirit in the 1960s while he was studying for ordination as a perpetual deacon.

Throughout 1974 (and much of 1975), I went with him every evening as we were deeply involved in seven bible studies a week, a couple led by my father and several led by others—including most of the charismatic meetings in the Twin Cities area. At that point I was Episcopalian (though I actually accepted the Lord at a Roman Catholic group). I was taught through immersion into the spirit-filled life with a well-trained, very experienced mentor to guide me.

In 1976 I married the woman who would transform my life, Patricia Harper. Here was a woman with a very clear call to ministry—both in gifts and in a desire to serve. Her wisdom and common sense approach to following Jesus has enabled me to open up more to the Lord and begin to become what He designed me to be.

I spent many years teaching end times prophecy until my pastor-wife convinced me that this was a waste of time in her church. Her conviction, which I have come to share, is that prophecy teaching normally becomes endlessly fascinating fleshly speculation without ever meeting the real needs of the people—namely are they ready to meet Jesus when He comes? I submitted to her wisdom.

Dealing with the occult

I had spent many years dabbling in the occult. Before my rebirth I had seriously explored Gurdjieff, Jung, Taoism, astrology, Tarot cards, numerology, symbolism, Zen Buddhism, I Ching, and more. I lived with an astrologer and hung out with people deeply involved in the occult.

My normal practice was to get completely involved and run my life by the precepts and practices of the belief system that currently had my attention. For example, when I was following the I Ching, I would check the oracle about every decision large or small, many times a day.

In all of these areas, it was eventually said that the next step was to get a personal spirit guide. I was never willing to do that. I had no reason to avoid this. In hindsight, it has become apparent that I was protected in all of this by my father's prayers as I wandered in spiritual danger rebelling from the church of my youth.

In fact, the Holy Spirit used the occultic practices to lead me to Himself. In the early 70s I read the Bible from cover to cover—out of boredom originally. In my arrogance, I came to the conclusion that the book was true but not necessary. It was just one of many ways to the Godhead.

Are all religions the same?

Except for Christianity and Judaism they are. All were inspired by our common enemy and serve to lead deluded people away from the living God. Because of this they have very similar beliefs and will almost certainly be gathered into one religion by the Antichrist and his prophet in the near future.

Finding Jesus

Several years earlier, my father and I had been in countless debates about all of this. I could see that he had something that worked for him. I was happy for him, but I didn't see Jesus as a viable alternative for me. As the debates became more like arguments, my dad wisely pulled back after making me promise to never quit seeking for the truth until I was convinced that I had found absolute truth.

After reading the Bible, I started getting messages in 1972 from the I Ching that I was going to be led through a radical life-changing experience. Toward the end of 1973 I moved into a cold-water storefront next to a rough bar in

the Indian (primarily Sioux) ghetto in south Minneapolis just outside the hippie area of the West Bank.

The spiritual darkness in that gallery became oppressive (though I had no real discernment spiritually). I knew my Dad was an exorcist, so I asked him to come over and clean the place out in October or November. Needless to say, he was tickled to do that!

For the next couple of months, my life got worse and worse. I was living on one large pancake a day, dry, filled with sunflower seeds and raisins. I couldn't afford more than that. I could barely pay the \$45 a month rent. Needless to say, my art wasn't selling well down in that area.

I was smoking pot every two hours as I had for the past seven years. I was dropping acid (LSD) once or twice a week. I had hundreds of acid trips by this time. Somehow, in my drugged stupor, I called my dad (on his birthday—January 15, 1974), and said, “I need to get filled with the spirit.” I had no idea what that meant and as far as I knew I had never heard that term before (though it just dawned on me that I had surely read it when I was going through the Bible in that psychological boot camp in the Californian Sierras).

Needless to say, my father came over and bundled me in the car and took me to his bible study of the night. They all laid hands on me. I renounced the world, the flesh and the devil. They prayed that I would be filled with the Holy Spirit in power.

I felt nothing. I was too stoned. I kept doing my drugs. As with all my spiritual adventures, I got into it fully (as much as I could in my intellectual arrogance). I gave Jesus six months to prove himself. I accepted the Bible as truth. The first indication that something had changed was the

note on my wall calendar/journal a couple days later that “I feel strangely peaceful”.

Learning about Jesus

I joined my dad every night at the bible studies with which he was involved. I started reading the Bible starting with John, then the epistles, then the gospels, then the prophets, then the epistles again, and so on.

The following month I actually started working again—day jobs. By March I had gotten hired as a cook downtown. Walking home from work (as I did every day) I was praying and singing like I always did. My songs changed to an unknown language and my songs became worship. I had received tongues. I never did have an emotional experience of conversion.

I devoured Dad’s library of Watchman Nee, Andrew Murray, Smith Wigglesworth, Oswald Chambers, Hudson Taylor, Rees Howells, Derek Prince, and many more including all the fashionable charismatic books of the day. By early 1975 I had read several hundred Christian books. I would often read two or three a day plus the Bible. I couldn’t get enough. I just poured the data into my drug-ravaged brain.

In that first six months I read the bible cover to cover several times, still doing drugs (pot and acid). My few friends all kicked me out because of Jesus. I had one friend left—a gay man named Gene Kunz. We talked and talked and talked on long acid trips at his apartment and wandering the streets of Minneapolis.

However, the acid trips had really changed. I could now see part of spiritual reality and I spent the entire trips in spiritual warfare fighting off the demons. There was no fear or danger, as far as I was concerned, with Jesus’ power in me—but it had become hard work as I went insane from

the drug and fought my way back to reality. (This was our method of character development—strange as it might seem to you). We were the results of the Timothy Leary school of personal development, followed by Baba Ram Das (though I had left that stuff far behind).

I remember that Gene gave me several hits of wonderful acid for my birthday in June of that year [1974]. But it had become too much. The Lord had changed me too much. I finally flushed them down the toilet and accepted my death (as talked about in Romans 6). I had come to realize that death was all my flesh deserved and that Jesus had covered that on the cross. I surrendered completely to my Lord.

What a ride it's been since then! My dad and I ministered in the gifts daily. I met my wife at one of the groups.

The Bible and Jesus

My dad convinced me that what I needed to study was the Bible. That and Jesus were all that mattered. He taught me to avoid commentaries and books about the Bible, Jesus, or the church. He was convinced that most of them promoted views that were slanted by personal theology. He filled me with books of testimony and anointed teachings and I read the Bible. I've found that to be good advice.