

EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

The Church as God Planned It

1 Timothy 1:1–6, 18–20; 2:1–8; 3:1–13; 4:11–16



LET’S BEGIN HERE

Shortly before his death, Paul wrote three letters on the subject of the local church—specifically on pastoral responsibilities within the church. These letters are 1 Timothy (written in AD 63), Titus (AD 63), and 2 Timothy (AD 67). The Pastoral Epistles, as they are commonly called, provide believers with the earliest and most reliable guidelines for the local church. They dictate the way issues in the church should be handled, the philosophy that should be embraced within the church, and the manner in which the church should be led. Over the centuries, human tradition has often outshouted biblical principles and caused the church to get off course, which has resulted in every conceivable extreme in teaching and in doctrine, including heresy. In this expositional study of 1 Timothy, we return to the source—the Bible—and discover afresh how God planned the church to function.



LET’S DIG DEEPER

1. Some Observations of the Church Today

The local church today is too narcissistic. Our insistence on human tradition instead of biblical truth, worldly success instead of godly success, size instead of depth, and division instead of unification turns the church into a joke. But Jesus is no court jester, and His death and resurrection are no laughing matter.



Quotable

*What the
gospels are
to the life
of Christ,
1 Timothy is
to the life
of the church.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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DOORWAY TO HISTORY

Remembering Our Historical Bearings

In the book of Acts, Luke ended his historical account of the early church with a cliff-hanger—with Paul cooling his heels under house arrest in Rome, awaiting a hearing with Emperor Nero. The lack of information about Paul’s later life—the outcome of his trial, where he traveled, and when he died—has made dating some of his later letters difficult. First Timothy is one of those letters. Fortunately, Paul’s writings combined with church tradition provide sufficient evidence for us to get our historical bearings before jumping into the details of 1 Timothy.

Paul’s three missionary journeys covered a span of about nine years, AD 48–56 (Acts 13:1–21:17). In AD 56, Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and accused of being an Egyptian revolutionary (21:27–40). Held for about five years, AD 56–60, Paul appeared before various tribunals and courts before he eventually appealed to Caesar (22:1–26:32), which was his right as a Roman citizen. Paul was sent to Rome and spent two years (AD 61–62) under house arrest there (27:1–28:31; Philippians 1:12–14). While chained to praetorian soldiers in Rome, Paul wrote Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians, known as the Prison Epistles. Paul’s release, which probably took place in AD 62, allowed him to travel with Timothy to Ephesus. Then Paul departed, and Timothy remained behind to deal with problems in the Ephesian church. Paul journeyed on to Crete, where he left Titus to deal with that church’s problems. On his way to Spain—a place he had longed to visit (Romans 15:22–25)—Paul paused and ministered in Macedonia in AD 63 and wrote his first letter to his young protégé, Timothy (1 Timothy 1:3).

2. An Overview of the Letter Timothy Received

The six chapters in 1 Timothy divide nicely into a 1-2-3 structure. Chapter one focuses on the relationship between Paul and Timothy. Chapters two and three focus on the business of ministry. And chapters four, five, and six focus on the life of the minister.



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LET’S LIVE IT

The purpose of 1 Timothy is to dispel the fog of confusion in the church about how its members are to live their lives in the world. First Timothy shows us how to live in light of “the mystery of godliness” (1 Timothy 3:16)—how to conduct ourselves as the body of Christ inside and outside the walls of the church (3:15–16). With this in mind, let’s consider four truths that should permeate the activities and attitudes of a local church today.

- *The church should desire to be a twenty-first-century ministry based on first-century principles.* The Bible is ever relevant. Procedures may change but principles do not.
- *There will always be tension between the ideal and the real.* Perfection is unrealistic. We must leave room for failure and brokenness or run the risk of losing grace and compassion.
- *Truth is truth, whether or not it’s modeled.* We hope our ministers are models of truth, but even if they aren’t, the truth still stands.
- *Regardless of the church’s weaknesses, it will not fail.* The church isn’t a perfect place, but no matter its blemishes, Jesus’ promise in Matthew 16:18 holds firm.

After completing this overview of 1 Timothy, in what ways is this first-century letter relevant and applicable to your twenty-first-century church?



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FIRST TIMOTHY

<i>Greeting (1:1–2)</i>	<p>Personal Encouragement and Exhortation</p> <p><u>Timothy’s task</u> <u>Paul’s testimony</u> <u>Gospel’s trustworthiness</u></p> <p>CHAPTER 1</p>	<p>The Ministry</p> <p>Men and women (2) (Prayer and submission)</p> <p>Elders and deacons (3) (Qualifications for leadership)</p> <p>CHAPTERS 2–3</p>	<p>The Minister</p> <p>Seeing the importance of (4): <u>Faithful teaching</u> <u>True godliness</u> <u>Sound doctrine</u> <u>Perseverance</u></p> <p>Paying attention to (5): <u>Various age groups</u> <u>Elders</u> <u>Widows</u> <u>Wisdom</u></p> <p>Developing a new perspective toward (6): <u>Masters and slaves</u> <u>Internals and externals</u> <u>Rich and poor</u> <u>Eternal vs. temporal</u></p> <p>CHAPTERS 4–6</p>	<i>Conclusion (6:21)</i>
Emphasis	The work of ministry		The one who ministers	
Command	Be true!	Be wise!	Be strong and faithful!	
Theme	Leadership of the church, the household of God			
Key Verses	3:14–15			
Christ in 1 Timothy	Jesus is the Mediator between God and people, the ransom for all, who came in the flesh and was taken up in glory (2:5–6; 3:16).			

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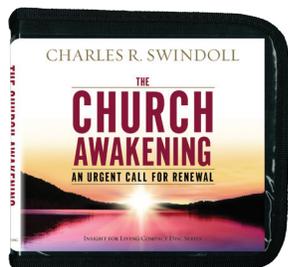
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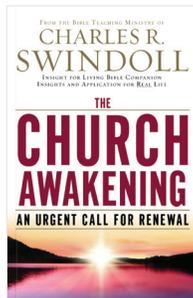
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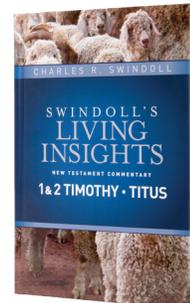
Tools for Digging Deeper



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