

Riverwood-Punchbowl Anglican Church

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*The
Pastoral Epistles*

*9 Bible Study Guides
on Paul's last letters*

Term 1, 2010

Some Gems from the Pastorals

The fundamental role of the church leader:

Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

1 Tim 4:12b-13

The heart of the gospel: Saved by grace.

He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

Titus 3:5a

Our response to salvation: Training in godliness.

For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

1 Tim 4:8

Introduction

The apostle Paul was a prolific letter writer. He had on-going concern for the Christian welfare of the people he had led to Christ and the churches he had established. He usually wrote to whole churches, but towards the end of his life, he wrote personal letters to his delegates Timothy and Titus.

Paul had left Timothy in charge of the church at Ephesus, and Titus in charge of the church in Crete, while he went on his last missionary journey. He wrote to them as church leaders, i.e., as Pastors, hence the name “Pastoral Epistles” is given to the three letters, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus.

It is a great privilege to be able to listen in on these very personal letters, in which Paul speaks passionately about the essential character and duties of the church leader. His last letter (2 Timothy) was written when he was in prison about to be executed, so we can appreciate how he was eager to say things which were really important.

All Christians are leaders in one way or another. We all share a responsibility for the welfare of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Hence, what we read here is highly relevant to all of us. Furthermore, Paul is very concerned about the life of the church and the lives of all the individuals in it. We will read a great deal which can be applied in significant ways to our own parish and to our own lives.

A special feature of the Pastoral Epistles is the importance of holding fast to sound doctrine, and our responsibility to “guard the good deposit entrusted to you” (2 Tim 1:14a). Over and over, he shows how what we believe has a direct impact on how we live.

I pray that these studies will help us all to develop in godliness, that we will become more completely a “people who know how to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God” (1 Tim 3:15).

Prepared by Max Gilbert
January 2010

Personal Notes

The Scriptures are God-breathed (i.e., they come from God himself) and are useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the person of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16-17)

Therefore, as we move through these studies, we should expect to be regularly taught, rebuked, corrected, trained and equipped. In the spaces below, you could make notes of how this has worked out for you personally.

From these letters, I have been taught the following:

From these letters, I have been rebuked in the following ways:

From these letters, I have been corrected in the following ways:

From these letters, I have been trained in the following ways:

As a result of all the above, “we are more thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (See 2 Tim 3:17). Praise God!!

Week 1, Commencing 7 February 2010

THEME: Problems Facing a New Church Leader.

In this week's daily readings we will find out about Timothy.

Day 1 Who was Timothy? Acts 15:36 - 16:5

We first meet Timothy in Acts 16:1, when Paul took Timothy on his second missionary journey. Where did Timothy live? Can you find out where this is? What do we know about Timothy's parents?

Day 2 Timothy's first work with Paul, on his second missionary journey. Acts 16:3-4, 14-15; 18: 1-5

Where are some of the places Timothy went with Paul? How did Timothy (and Silas) help Paul in Corinth?

Day 3 Timothy helps Paul in Ephesus. Acts 19: 1-2, 8-10, 21-22; 20:1-4.

This reading describes Paul's third missionary journey. About how long was Paul in Ephesus (which is where Timothy was stationed when he received the letter 1 Timothy from Paul)? How is Timothy described? What can you glean about how Timothy helped Paul?

Day 4 Timothy and Paul.

Read the following verses, to gain details about the close relationship between Paul and Timothy, and about Timothy's character: Rom 16:21; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10; 2 Cor 1:19; Phil 2:19-22; 1 Thess 3:2-6. What do you think about Timothy?

Day 5 Timothy and Paul

Read the following: 2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; Philemon 1:1. What do you make of the fact that Timothy is counted as a co-author of 6 of Paul's letters?

STUDY PASSAGE 1 Timothy 1:1-20

To Discuss:

1. What do you think are the main roles and duties of a church leader?

2. Paul has left Timothy in Ephesus as leader of the church (1 Tim 1:3; 4:13-14). What particular instructions does Paul give Timothy in this new leadership role? (verses 3-11)

3. Paul urges Timothy to stop people teaching false doctrine. He also says that the goal of this command is love. How does preventing false teaching have a goal of love? (Consider how teaching true and false doctrine in our own church could promote or hinder the goal of love?)

4. From verses 3-11, what can you suggest about the content of the false teaching and the character of the false teachers in Ephesus? What do you think are the chief false teachings which we face today?

5. From verses 12-17, what can you say about Paul's character, and why God chose him as his servant of the gospel? Discuss how each of us can be like Paul in displaying God's "unlimited patience".

PRAY

Pray that God will protect us all from false teaching, and that our appointed leaders, and each of us, will "fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience." (v18-19).

Week 2, Commencing 14 February 2010

THEME : Prayer and Teaching in the Church.

In this week's daily readings we will explore the circumstances in which 1 Timothy was written.

Day 1 Paul's fourth missionary journey.

Paul's first 3 missionary journeys are described in Acts. Paul is in prison in Rome at the end of Acts, but early Christian literature (Clement of Rome and Eusebius) indicates that he was released and travelled to Spain. This is consistent with his intention (Rom 15:24, 28) and provides a circumstance in which 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus were written.

Day 2 Paul writes to Timothy (1 Tim 1:3; 3:14-15)

Where and why do you think Paul wrote to Timothy?

Day 3 What was Paul's purpose in writing to Timothy? (1 Tim 3:15)

What was Paul's purpose in writing to Timothy? How is this borne out by the content of the letter, as far as you have read it so far?

Day 4 1 Timothy written to Timothy as church leader.

Paul's other letters were written to churches as a whole, or to all the Christians in an area (see e.g., Eph 1:1) or as a personal letter to a believer (Philemon). In contrast, 1&2 Timothy and Titus were written to church leaders to help and encourage them in their work as church leaders (1 Tim 1:3; 4:14). What difference does this make to the way you understand the letter?

Day 5 Paul as the author

Paul is explicitly named as the author (1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; Titus 1:1). People have noticed differences in style and content between these letters and his other letters. How could you explain this?

STUDY PASSAGE 1 Timothy 2:1-15

To Discuss:

1. In what ways do you think Australian government policies help or hinder Christian and church life in Australia?

2. What do verses 1-8 say about how and why we should pray regularly for governing authorities? A point at issue in the Roman empire of the time appears to be that the emperor promoted himself as the mediator between God and humans, thus dislodging Jesus from his rightful place. In what subtle ways do our governments do the same thing? Spend some time praying for our governments.

3. The interpretation of verses 11-15 is controversial. Some of the main interpretations are (i) that women must not preach in church; (ii) that women must not teach in church in an authoritative way (e.g., a women cannot be the senior minister, but can preach in church under the headship of the senior minister); (iii) that these verses relate to a specific problem in the church in Ephesus in the first century AD, but do not in general apply today, so that there is no blanket restriction on women preaching. What principles would help you interpret this passage? How do the details of the argument and the context favour one interpretation or another?

4. Discuss the role that men and women should have in the leadership of our church in Riverwood-Punchbowl in the light of this passage. Discuss how we can be faithful to God's revelation in the Bible yet still accommodate faithful Christians who interpret this passage in different ways?

PRAY

Pray for the leaders of our church, that there will be effective ministry by both men and women in ways that remain true to God's directions to us.

Week 3, Commencing 21 February 2010

THEME: Qualities of Church leaders.

Day 1 1 Timothy 3:1-12

What church leadership roles are recognised in this passage?

Day 2 Acts 20:17, 28

When Paul left Ephesus (which is where Timothy was leader when he received this letter from Paul) at the end of his third missionary journey, he spoke to the Ephesian “elders” (v17), but he also called them “overseers” (v2). This suggests that “elders” and “overseers” are fairly interchangeable terms.

Day 3 1 Timothy 3:1,2

The Greek word translated “overseer” (NIV) is episkopos. In older versions (RSV) this was translated as “bishop”. What is a bishop in modern usage? Why is the NIV right in avoiding the translation “bishop”?

Day 4 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:17, 18

What other things are said about elders in 1 Timothy?

Day 5 Titus 1:5-9

What is said about elders/overseers in this passage?

STUDY PASSAGE 1 Timothy 3:1-16

To Discuss:

1. Make a list of the qualities/skills which you think are most desirable in a Christian leader, and discuss which ones are most important and why.
2. Compare your list with the list of qualities given in 1 Tim 3:1-7 (elders/overseers) and 1 Tim 8-13 (deacons). Are the items on the list mostly “skills” that you could learn in a theological college, or are they mostly “character”? Discuss the relative importance of skills and character on a Christian leader.
3. Paul describes the church as the “household of God” (1 Tim 3:15). Discuss (i) how the qualities of the church leader (as given in this passage) reflect a healthy family life, and (ii) how the model of the church as a “family” should influence how the church is led, and how we live as a church.
4. The list of qualities for elders is quite similar to that for deacons. What does this suggest about the specific roles of elders and deacons? (“Deacon” in ancient Greek and in the Bible refers to a general servant like role, and so is quite different from the modern anglican use of the term deacon, where it refers to an ordained person (man?) on the way to ordination as priest/rector.) Discuss the spiritual character and qualities which ought to be required of those doing various roles in our church such as: maintenance, morning tea, leading in music, looking after the finances.
5. When you look at the qualities required of church leaders, how do you think they differ from those desirable in all Christians?

PRAY Praise God for our leaders, and pray that he will continue to raise up godly leaders amongst us. Pray that we all might grow in many or all of the qualities required of Christian leaders.

Week 4, Commencing 28 February 2010

THEME: Training in Godliness.

Day 1 1 Timothy 4:1-5

What reason does Paul give for opposing those who forbid marriage and order people to abstain from certain foods?

Day 2 1 Timothy 4:6-16

In verses 15-16, what are the key points about which Paul instructs Timothy to be diligent?

Day 3 1 Timothy 5:1-2

How should the Christian pastor relate to people in the congregation?

Day 4 1 Timothy 5:3-16

What is the solution given to the practical problem of caring for widows in need?

Day 5 1 Timothy 5:17-25

What principles are given here for the discipline of church leaders?

STUDY PASSAGE 1 Timothy 4:1-16

To Discuss:

1. False teachers in Timothy's time were forbidding people from marrying and ruling them not to eat certain foods. Think about do's and don'ts that modern Christians sometimes insist on. Discuss the merits and demerits of these rules, and how you would decide whether or not to follow them.

2. Paul's insistence that "everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving" (v 4) might suggest that a Christian can do anything he/she likes. However, he also insists on the importance of "training to be godly". In the light of 1 Timothy chapters 4 and 5, discuss what are some of the characteristics of the godly life.

3. How would you "train" to be godly? Discuss good and bad ways to train. Consider setting some training schedules for yourself and your home church group.

4. In the light of verses 11-15, what are key features of the role of the church leader? Discuss how this should shape all of our lives as Christians, and the life of the congregation at Riverwood and Beverly Hills North.

REFLECTION

What have you written so far in your personal notes (on pages 4 - 5 above)? Take some time to reflect on what God has been doing to you through these studies.

PRAY

Pray for God's wisdom as we seek out what it means to be godly in our own lives and as a church, Pray for each other as we train and work hard to be godly.

Week 5, Commencing 7 March 2010

THEME: Using Wealth in a Godly Way.

Day 1 1 Timothy 6:1-2

Why should we show respect to our employers and serve them well?

Day 2 1 Timothy 6:3-5, 20-21

Observe the recurring theme in 1 Timothy regarding the need to avoid “myths and endless genealogies” (1:4), “godless myths and old wives’ tales” (4:7), “unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words” (6:4) and “godless chatter and the opposing ideas” (6:20).

Day 3 1 Timothy 6:5-10

List the things which these verses say about wealth and financial gain.

Day 4 1 Timothy 6:11-16

What do these verses teach us about God?

Day 5 1 Timothy 6:17-19

How should the rich use their wealth?

STUDY PASSAGE 1 Timothy 6:1-21

To Discuss:

- 1.** Discuss the various attitudes to wealth which you have seen amongst people, especially Christians. How can people think “godliness” is a “means of financial gain” (v5)? Discuss how the desire to get rich can lead us into temptation (v9)? Suggest ways that “the love of money” can be “a root of all kinds of evil” (v10).

- 2.** Discuss whether you think v8 is reasonable (“If we have food and clothing we will be content with that.”) Suggest ways that we could train in godliness (4:8) so that such an attitude becomes natural for us.

- 3.** It is not surprising that some Christians become reasonably wealthy. If we respect our employers and serve them well (6:1-2), financial reward is often a natural outcome. To what extent should Christians avoid wealth? To what extent should Christians give away all their wealth? What can we learn from verses 6:5-10 and 17-19 about the godly way to deal with such wealth as God entrusts to us?

- 4.** (Privately, or in the group) try to describe your own attitude to your lack of wealth or to your possession of wealth. If you find anything that is inconsistent with what we have read here, think about how you might develop a more godly attitude and practice in relation to money.

PRAY

Pray for each other and for our church as a whole, that we might not be lead into temptation over money, that we will be content with what God has given us, since he is the King of Kings, and gives life to everything. Pray that we will be generous and willing to share.

Week 6, Commencing 14 March 2010

THEME: Becoming a Worker Approved by God.

The daily questions for this week explore the background to 2 Timothy. It is likely that Paul wrote this letter to Timothy after his fourth missionary journey, shortly before he was executed.

Day 1 Paul writes from prison.

The text of 2 Timothy implies that Paul was in prison and facing execution. He appears to be in a cold dungeon (2 Tim 4:13). He is suffering and in some place which is hard to find (2 Tim 1:17), and describes himself as a prisoner (2 Tim 1:8)

Day 2 Paul expects to be executed soon.

Paul's words in 2 Tim 4:6-8 suggest he expects to be executed. The urgent tone in 2 Tim 4:9 suggests that his execution is imminent.

Day 3 Paul has been deserted

Who had deserted Paul (2 Tim 1:15; 4:10)? Who was still with Paul (2 Tim 4:10)? [Note from Max: many scholars note a different style and language between the pastorals and the rest of Paul's letters, and therefore conclude that someone other than Paul wrote them. However, I rather like the theory that Luke wrote down the letters under Paul's general directions, sometimes using his (Luke's) own words.]

Day 4 Paul's concern for sound doctrine.

Paul repeatedly urges Timothy to cling to sound doctrine. Read 2 Tim 1:14; 3:14; 4:4-5.

Day 5 Paul's special relationship with Timothy

Paul longs to see Timothy (2 Tim 1:4) and twice urged Timothy to come to him in these final days of his earthly life (2 Tim 9, 21).

STUDY PASSAGE 2 Timothy 2:14-26

To Discuss:

- 1.** What would be your final words to our church, if you knew you were about to be executed for the gospel? Or, to ask it another way, what are your deepest desires for our church?

- 2.** Paul's own emphasis is three fold: (i) that the church avoid quarrelling about words and godless chatter (verses 14, 16, 23); (ii) that Timothy correctly handle the word of truth and instruct the truth (verses 15, 25); and (iii) that Christians flee from evil desires and do their best to be a worker approved by God (verses 15, 20-22).

- 3.** Discuss how it is possible to avoid quarrelling, yet instruct the truth to those with different views. How can we distinguish what is "foolish and stupid arguments" from instructing those who oppose the truth? Identify an actual issue about which you have observed or been involved in an "argument" with other church members. Discuss good ways to deal with the issue, taking notice of verses 24-25.

- 4.** "If a man cleanses himself . . . he will be an instrument for noble purposes." (v21) Discuss how this might work out in our personal and church lives.

PRAYER and REFLECTION

Reflect on things which are really important in the Christian life. Pray that God might cause our church and ourselves individually to be characterised by these things. Look back over your personal notes on pages 4 and 5. Thank God that he cares enough to equip each of us to grow in godliness.

Week 7, Commencing 21 March 2010

THEME: Paul's last words.

Day 1 2 Timothy 3:1-9

What does Paul expect to happen in the last days?

Day 2 2 Timothy 3:10-13

What should we expect if we desire to live a godly life, in spite of the evil in the world around us?

Day 3 2 Timothy 3:14-17

List all the things that are said about the scriptures in these verses.

Day 4 2 Timothy 4:1-8

What does verse 1 suggest about the importance of the words which follow?

Day 5 2 Timothy 4:9-22

Make a list of all the people Paul mentions by name here, and note the depth of personal feelings conveyed.

STUDY PASSAGE 2 Timothy 4:1-22

To Discuss:

1. Discuss how important is what we believe, as distinct from how we live.
2. Make a careful list of all the things which Paul charges Timothy to do in verses 2-5. Notice that the *way* we do things is important, not only *what* we do. Make a list of the reasons Paul gives.
3. Think up practical ways by which our Christian leaders (and all of us, in that all Christians have a responsibility toward other Christians) could implement the various items you identified in the last question.
4. Meditate on the attitudes which Paul shows towards his sufferings for Christ, and towards those who have helped and hindered him. Discuss examples where you have observed modern day Christians act and feel in similar ways. Think about how you could become more like Paul, who in turn was an imitator of Christ.

PRAY

Pray for the ministry team at St. Andrew's and St Matthew's, for the members of your Home Church Group, and for yourself, as we all seek to live godly lives in a fallen world.

Week 8, Commencing 28 March 2010

THEME: False Teaching and Sound Teaching

This week, and in the week after Easter, we will be looking at Paul's letter to Titus.

Day 1 Titus 1:1-9

Where was Titus located and why did Paul leave him there?

Day 2 Titus 1:5-9

Compare the qualities of a leader listed here in comparison with the qualities mentioned in 1 Timothy 3. What special responsibility is described in verse 9?

Day 3 Titus 1:10-16

Why should the false teachers mentioned here be silenced?

Day 4 Titus 2:1-8

What should Titus teach the young men, and why?

Day 5 Titus 2:9-15

God is purifying a people for himself (v14). What are the characteristics of these people? What principle should guide Christians in their relationships with each other?

STUDY PASSAGE Titus 1:10 - 2:15

To Discuss:

- 1.** Pick up and continue your discussion from previous weeks about what impact our beliefs do or should have on our lives. Identify some of the things you believe about Jesus and discuss how these beliefs affect your life. Do you know someone who believes something different about Jesus? If so, can you see how that different belief leads to a different life?

- 2.** Paul sometimes stresses that teaching/instruction should be very patient (2 Tim 4:2) and gentle (2 Tim 2:25). In Titus there is a more forceful tone (e.g., Titus 1:13). How can our leaders and ourselves decide when to be gentle and when to rebuke sharply. What guidance on this can you gain from the passage?

- 3.** Take one (or more) of the groups described in Titus 2:1-10 (i.e., older men, older women, younger women, young men, or slaves) and discuss how we could encourage each other to follow the patterns of godliness described.

- 4.** Reflect on verses 2:11-14. Note we are not trying to earn God's favour by struggling to be godly. Nor does God leave us to our own strength. Rather our efforts at godliness are an appropriate response to the salvation God brings (v11-12). Further, it is God himself who redeemed us from wickedness and is purifying a people for himself (v 14).

PRAY

Thank God for his love for us; that our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ gave himself for us, to build a people eager to do what is good.

Week 9, Commencing 11 April 2010

THEME: The Kindness and Love of God

Day 1 Titus 3:1-2

How does Paul recommence his description of the godly Christian life?

Day 2 - 4 Titus 3:3-8

Verses 4-7 set out a well known, classic statement of the Christian faith. Consider one or two phrases each day, and try to learn the passage off by heart.

When the kindness and love of God
our saviour appeared

States when salvation occurred.

He saved us

*The principal statement: this is all
about our salvation.*

Not because of righteous things we had done

*This is not the reason why God
saved us.*

But because of his mercy.

This is the reason.

He saved us,
through the washing of rebirth and
renewal by the Holy Spirit

This is the means of salvation

whom he poured out on us so generously
through Jesus Christ our Saviour

This describes who used the means.

so that, having been justified by his grace,

*The result of new birth through the
Spirit is that we are declared
innocent before God.*

we might become heirs
having the hope of eternal life.

*This is the purpose and result of our
salvation*

Day 5 Titus 3:9-10-16

According to v10, how should a divisive person be treated?

STUDY PASSAGE Titus 3:1-15

To Discuss:

- 1.** What do you think are the key features of the Christian faith? Write out your own answer to this as an individual. Then, as a group exercise, compare your summaries and see if this helps you to improve your own answers.

- 2.** Discuss your reflections on verses 4-7. Discuss what it all means. Are there any aspects of these verses which you need to give more emphasis in your habitual understanding of the Christian faith? See if you can say these verses off by heart.

- 3.** Do you think that there are any key aspects of the Christian faith which are not highlighted in verses 4-7? If so, how would you add these to the verses? Do you think anything has really changed by doing this?

- 4.** Our study of the pastoral epistles has taken us on a rich journey, describing how a church should conduct itself, the qualities of church leaders (and by implication, all of us), the characteristics of a godly life, and the importance of clinging to sound doctrine. Discuss the most important things which you will take away from these studies.

PRAY

Thank God for the privilege of reading and discussing his word together. Pray that his word and what we have learned will indeed continue to impact our lives and our church.

HOW TO USE THESE NOTES

1. Read the daily Bible readings on the left hand side of the double page, and think about the question for the day. Make a note of your answer and any difficulties you have.
2. The questions on the right hand side of the double page are designed for group discussion. Think about these questions before you go to your discussion group.
3. The daily bible readings and study passages follow the morning and evening sermon series. You may find it helpful to take notes of the sermons.
4. Please don't be frustrated if you can't understand or answer the questions: the important thing is that you read God's word.
5. Use this guide for family or personal Bible reading, and if you would like to join a discussion group, please see one of the ministers.

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