

# 1 Timothy Overview

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[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you, Catherine, very much for reading that. Good morning, St. Silas. If we've not met, I'm Martin Ayres, the lead pastor here, and it's my privilege to be giving this talk through the whole of 1 Timothy.

Last week, we came to the end of a sermon series working through 1 Timothy in recent weeks. It's a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the man he'd left in charge of the church he'd planted in Ephesus.

And so this morning, we're doing something we don't usually do. We're going to take a step back and think about the message of the letter as a whole. So if you don't like it, you can think, thank goodness we don't do that very often. If you do like it, you can let me know.

If you're here as a visitor or a guest, we're recapping a number of weeks you've not been here for, or you're usually in youth zone, so you've not heard it. But I think there's still lots here for you as we hear the marks from this book of a healthy church. What are the marks of a healthy church?

So let's pray. Let's ask for God's help. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you promise that the unfolding of your word gives light.

[ 1 : 09 ] And we ask, Heavenly Father, that you will lighten our path this morning. We ask that these words would be more for us than words on a page, but would be an experience of meeting with you.

That you will nourish our hungry souls with the food of your word. That you will inform our minds and inflame our hearts as we see Jesus more clearly.

For we ask in his name. Amen. Well, you could say that 1 Timothy is a book about leadership. And our culture is always thinking about leadership.

The British and Irish Lions are in Australia at the moment. They tour every four years. And lots of the features in the build-up to the tests that start next week are about the leaders.

Maru Atoje is the captain at the moment. He was in the news last week saying that he's still zooming in for church Bible study. From Australia. But there he is pictured with the previous captains of the Lions behind us.

[ 2 : 14 ] Big attention to the next leader. People are writing about the leadership lessons from the summer blockbuster movie F1. Where Brad Pitt plays Sonny Hayes.

He's still looking good, isn't he, Brad Pitt? And he's this driver who comes out of retirement to race alongside a mentor, a younger driver. And there's lots of attention to what are the leadership lessons from Sonny.

In the TV series Designated Survivor, the story is told of an explosion in the Capitol building in Washington, D.C. that kills the president.

And everyone in the line of succession except this low-level cabinet member, Thomas Kirkman. So he is propelled reluctantly into the role of president.

Can he lead America in a time of crisis? Then in the series Zero Day, spot the formula. Robert De Niro's turn playing former president George Mullen who gets brought back to lead the USA after a crippling cyber attack.

[ 3 : 18 ] We think about leadership a lot. Well, the church in Ephesus has been blown off course. And Paul writes this letter with urgent instructions to Timothy on how to lead the church back into health.

Chapter 1, verse 3. As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer.

And it's sobering to think, isn't it, that this was a church that had had the best possible start a church could get. The Apostle Paul, who was himself an eyewitness of the risen Lord Jesus.

Jesus had met with him on the road to Damascus. He planted this church. You couldn't get a better start than that. And within just a few years, it's in deep trouble.

And the stakes couldn't be higher. So in chapter 3, we had our key verses in the letter. If you can follow them, it would really help you to keep the Bible open and just follow them.

[ 4 : 23 ] But they'll come on the screen as well. Chapter 3, verse 14. He says, And that's a remarkable thing, isn't it?

Writing and delivering a letter in the first century was a very time-consuming and expensive thing to do. And Paul knows he's on his way. He's hoping to come soon. But in case he's delayed, he's got to get this message.

Why the urgency? Well, verse 15. You need to know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

These are our key verses for our series. That the truth being referred to there is the saving truth about Jesus. The truth people need to hear to be saved. And the church is to be like Nelson's column in Trafalgar Square.

Whereas it holds up the statue of Nelson for everyone to see. Or the statue in George Square holding up Sir Walter Scott. The healthy church holds up the saving truth of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done.

[ 5 : 37 ] So that the world can put their trust in him. And I think that's so helpful because there's lots of nitty-gritty practical instruction in 1 Timothy. And it often puts people off reading it and spending time in it.

Because we think, well, I don't find that very exciting. How does this about the church connect with the real world that I have to live in day by day? But 1 Timothy shows us that a healthy local church is the hope of the real world out there.

For when we get things right and we get our house in order, we can hold out the truth about Jesus that the world needs. The stakes couldn't be higher. And the whole letter is structured around the need for good leadership.

It's structured like a sandwich, as you sometimes find in the Bible. And the bread on the outside, chapter 1 and chapter 6, are about the detail of the false teaching that's going on.

Then we move in a layer. Chapters 2 and 5 are about godliness in the local church. Then we move in a layer still. And there's instruction in chapter 3 and in chapter 5 as well about elders, about the kind of leaders Timothy is to look for and appoint.

[ 6 : 48 ] And then you get right to the middle, the meat in the middle of the letter, chapter 4. And it's Paul's direct instruction to Timothy, this is how you've got to lead in the crisis.

So chapter 4 verse 1, we hear a bit more about the false teaching itself. And he says this, The Spirit clearly says in later times, some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

So the warning here is that demonic teaching can get itself into the pulpit of the church in these last days. What is this devastating demonic teaching?

Well, we learn more about it in verse 3. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth.

So we might expect that if the devil got control of the pulpit of a church, he would bring a message of Christians live however you want. Just live the same as the world.

[ 7 : 56 ] Live for yourselves. Don't be godly. Rather, in chapter 4, what we hear is a different kind of demonic teaching here. It's Christians, there are things that you've been enjoying that you need to start doing without.

Forbidding marriage. Forbidding certain foods that God has made for people to enjoy. Why is that something the devil would want in his church? Because we are to know God as a good father, a generous father, who's given us good things for our enjoyment, so that we can trust him and gladly obey him, knowing he wants what's best for us.

And when we add restrictions that are not in the scriptures, we start to make God look much more miserly and stingy.

And we wonder, maybe we can't trust that this God is good, just as Adam and Eve struggled in Genesis chapter 3. And then we just get a hint later in chapter 5 of why the stakes are so high for this church and for this letter, why Paul may have felt the need to get something over to Timothy

with such urgency.

So in chapter 5, verse 22, we get this intriguing bit of instruction. Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands. That's a reference to ordination, to kind of appointing leaders.

[ 9 : 18 ] Don't be hasty in that. And do not share in the sins of others. This is to Timothy. Keep yourself pure. Stop drinking only water.

And use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses. Now, why would the Apostle Paul, in a letter that is being read out to a church in Ephesus, need to get on to Timothy's personal health care plan, that he could do with a bit of wine for his health?

Well, is it that in a church where the ascetics are saying, abstain from certain things, why has Timothy stopped drinking wine?

Has Timothy already compromised to avoid being confronted and criticized? Is he following the path of least resistance instead of standing firm and courageously defending the truth?

Well, how does a church get back on track and stay on track? First of all, the points are on the sheet. There is about 10 points. I've tried to put them as three. First of all, the healthy church looks for good leaders shaped by God's word.

[ 10 : 29 ] The healthy local church should be raising them up from our own church family. So chapter 3, verse 1, here is a trustworthy saying, whoever aspires to be an overseer, that is a leader or an elder, desires a noble task.

Churches, like St. Silas, drift into thinking, when you need a new minister, they just appear. They kind of, somewhere, somehow, they go off to Bible college and they come out the other end.

And when you want one, you advertise and they just show up. Well, if a church like ours isn't raising up people willing to take on cross-shaped, servant-hearted leadership responsibility in church life and to move towards ordained ministry, they won't appear.

So Paul assures us, it is a noble thing, he says, chapter 3, verse 1, it's a thing to celebrate and honor when men step forward with the desire, the willingness to take on responsibility in church leadership.

And the church should look after its pastor teachers. So if we look over to chapter 5, verse 17, as he comes back to elders, he says, the elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

[ 11 : 54 ] Well, he said that everyone in the church should be honored, so that's the first kind of honor. He says double honor because there he's referring to the need to provide financially for those who are set apart to be pastors.

And Paul's explanation for this is, think of your ministers like cattle, verse 18. The scripture says, do not muzzle an ox while it's treading out the grain.

So you'd look after your oxen, look after your pastors. And then it's a task we should take great care over because appointing somebody inappropriate can be a disaster.

So in verse 22, that instruction we've already seen, do not be hasty in the laying on of hands and do not share in the sins of others. So we look for people coming forward to be the next generation of gospel workers.

We pray for God to raise them up, but we're not unduly hasty in ordaining them lest we make a mistake. So we pray as a church, month by month at our central prayer meeting, that the Lord will raise up workers for the harvest field, that the next generation of gospel workers and ordained church leaders will emerge in our church and in churches around us.

[ 13 : 10 ] It's brilliant. We've got four new ministry trainees starting in September here with Az and Rona and Josh and Kay stepping forward for training in that. And Andrew McKenzie will be staying on in a new training role towards ordained ministry.

But what is the role of being a church leader? I used to be a lawyer and I trained for it and it was very clear in the training what a lawyer is and what makes a good lawyer. I could tell you what a lawyer does and what makes for a good lawyer.

What about a church minister? What do they do and what makes for a good one? Well, 1 Timothy tells us. First of all, they faithfully teach.

So we look for leaders who will faithfully teach. Chapter 4, verse 6. This is the heart of the letter, chapter 4. And in chapter 4, verse 6, Paul tells Timothy, point these things out to the brothers and sisters and you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.

So the good minister is nourishing themselves in God's word, in their daily life, and then they are teaching and correcting and encouraging the church from God's word.

[14:28] So chapter 4, verse 11, he says, command and teach these things. Verse 13, until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

And then in verse 16, summarizing the chapter, watch your life and doctrine closely, persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

So an older, experienced senior minister came to St. Silas some years ago, Jack Strain's dad, Greg Strain, and he said to me as he looked around St. Silas, there's a good thing going on here, Martin. Don't do anything daft. Don't do anything daft doctrinally. Don't do anything daft morally. You see what he's saying? He's just reading out 1 Timothy 4, verse 16.

Watch your life. Watch your doctrine. That is key. That's the job. Teach faithfully. And as I said a few weeks ago, it means that at St. Silas, we don't do ministry in this kind of way because we are a certain kind of person, a sort of particularly Bible-y kind of person, group of people, or particularly bookish group of Christians.

[15:42] We structure the kind of the ministry of the church here in this way, focused on the Bible, because that's in the job description in 1 Timothy chapter 4. And it's good to ask yourself, is that what you look for in your church leader?

Because we might be thinking, given what we know about leadership from the world, I get that leadership is important, and I tell you what, if Maru Etoje or Brad Pitt or Robert De Niro or Kiefer Sutherland ever start leading a church, I will be there because I've seen them and they have charisma.

Well, if you move to a new city and you look for a church, 1 Timothy says, look for a leader committed to faithfully teaching and applying what's in the Bible.

Then we see critically that they need the right character. They have to be leaders who set a godly example. So chapter 4 verse 16 again, he says, watch your life and doctrine closely.

And that requirement again runs right through chapter 4, like a spine through the chapter. So in chapter 4 verse 7, he says, train yourself to be godly. The verb is gymnase yourself, as we saw a few weeks ago.

[16:57] Physical training is of some value. It's good to look after yourself physically, but godliness has value for all things. Spiritual fitness.

And then in verse 12, he writes to Timothy, don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, in purity.

So when we're looking for church leaders, we're looking for men whose lives are shaped by God's word. And we know how important this is because it is so damaging when it goes wrong, isn't it?

The evangelical church has faced horrible scandals in the last few years. In my newspaper this week, there was an obituary about a minister in America who'd fallen into terrible scandal.

And there was news of a trial in London about another former church minister who is accused of horrific things while he was working as a church minister.

[17:57] And we've seen, we get podcast series and news articles and TV documentaries about scandals that have corrupted the evangelical church.

And wherever it happens, the fallout is horrific for many people. scandals about money, about sex, about abuse of power, about heavy shepherding. There are people in our church family, some of you here, who've experienced being badly mistreated by Christian leaders.

And 1 Timothy helps us make sense of why that is so painful because it has so much to say about the character of Christian leaders. And for those of us in Christian leadership, it's a very daunting letter.

It's a very high bar that is set here. Of course, though, we shouldn't expect our Christian leaders to be perfect. What we should expect of them is that they are Christians.

That is, they are sinners, depraved people, who found a savior in Jesus. But Timothy is told in verse 15 that everyone should be able to see his progress.

[19:06] So we should be able to see in our leaders a model of people who mourn their sin like every Christian should. They're trying to make progress in being transformed by Jesus to be more like him.

And what we see in them is a deep dependence on Jesus. So that when you look at your church leaders, you see Jesus, not like a picture, like they're perfect, modeling him, but you see Jesus like

you're looking through a window because you see that they're depending on him.

The problem, though, is that we just love charisma, don't we? We fall for it every time. We love charisma instead of character. We want magnetism from a leader. We want great communication skills.

We want vision. Or we just want someone who's funny. Or we just want someone who's competent, someone who's a bit better organized than the last guy, a good CEO.

Well, 1 Timothy says to us, character is key. Like the Scottish preacher, Robert Murray McShane, famously said, my congregation's greatest need is my personal godliness.

[ 20 : 20 ] That is our first point. The healthy church looks for leaders shaped by God's word. So what will the fruit of that be? In church life. That's our second point.

The healthy church grows a culture shaped by God's character. We're just going to look at the headlines today, but it might be good to think to yourself as we reflect back as a church on the time we've had in 1 Timothy, which of these are we doing well at as a church to give thanks for?

And which of these are we finding more of a challenge to work on? First, we should be a family church where everyone is honored. So chapter 5, verse 1, it's on the screen.

He says to Timothy, do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters with absolute purity.

Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. And we saw when Tim Schoole brought us through this passage a couple of weeks ago how the word honor comes up again and again.

[ 21 : 29 ] Whatever our life situations as a church, we should be a place where everyone treats everyone else with honor and dignity. In chapter 2, Paul honors God's good design for men and women.

He gives separate instructions for men and women about what it looks like to be godly and about roles in church life because he wants men and women to be honored as men and women.

In chapter 5, he addresses how to honor the widows in the church. So we're to be a family church where everyone has dignity. Next, we're to be an outward-looking church shaped by its mission.

And we see that in chapter 2. So verses 3 and 4, they're there on the screen. Obviously, you can see them in your Bibles. He says that God is a Savior who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

And so what he calls the church to in light of knowing God wants everyone to be saved is fervent prayer that's outward-looking. Verse 1, I urge then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all people, for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

[ 22 : 46 ] All kinds of prayers for all kinds of people that God would save them. And you think of parts of the world that are the most unreached for Jesus where it's so hard to share Jesus.

What a difference it would make in some of those countries if a government leader became a Christian. Wouldn't that be wonderful to transform the opportunity for mission in those places to make Jesus known?

So we pray. That brings us to the next mark of a healthy church that we'll be godly, a holy church bearing the family likeness. We're God's household and we are to look more and more like him.

So the same verses here, as we pray that for kings and those in authority, the goal in verse 2 is that we, God's people, can live godly and holy lives.

Lives that attract people to Jesus. That by our distinctive lives we would shine in the world like stars in the sky drawing people to Jesus.

[ 23 : 52 ] And it's hard, isn't it, in the world when God's word most challenges the culture, when the values in God's word are most counter-cultural.

what we agonize over is we don't want to look different. But that's God's plan is that we will look different and that over time people will see that it's God's word that has the wisdom because the God who is there is good and he made us.

And so we are to live obedient lives that are holy and godly and draw people around us to him.

Trust the process. I've got a friend, Rene, I was at Bible college with him.

He was one of the cleverest men I've ever met, an analytical mind. And as a young adult from a non-Christian family he went on an Oak Hall holiday, a Christian holiday and he said that by the end

of the holiday he knew Christianity was true because of the way the people, the Christians he'd spent the week with lived their lives.

For our youth here it's what we hope and pray for about Friday Night Live and school scripture union groups and summer camps that if you brought along a friend they might still be saying you know I'm not sure about the Jesus stuff I've still got some questions but we hope that what they could say from their experiences there is something about this group of people.

[ 25 : 19 ] This is a youth group like nowhere else I've ever been. The way they live. The way they welcome me. A mission shaped church. A holy church.

Next we're to be a generous church. We saw that last week because our hearts are set on the future. Chapter 6 verse 17 Paul tells Timothy charges Timothy command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth which is so uncertain but to put their hope in God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

So it's as we kind of yearn for our future with the living God as we know that is true treasure to be with him so we put our hope in him it leaves us able to be open handed and generous with the money he gives us.

So these are some of the marks of a healthy church that we've seen in 1st Timothy and yet it would be a mistake for us to come out from 1st Timothy making the central focus of our teaching as a church the heartbeat of our preaching behavior behavior when in 1st Timothy what we've seen is that one of the problems that's described in chapter 1 was a focus on the law of God a kind of religious moralism so what should be the heartbeat of our ministry well that's our third point and the healthy church never moves on from God's savior so in chapter 1 Paul says that the false teachers are misusing the Bible they were focusing unduly on the commands in the Bible and then he points Timothy back to the heart of his ministry chapter 1 verse 15 he says here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom

I am the worst that's the message that drives all of Paul's ministry and he points out that his own personal story of how Jesus saved him verse 16 displays his immense patience so that people can look at the apostle Paul who was having Christians put to death and think well if if God's mercy can extend to him then even though I've done terrible things it can extend to me no one is too bad to be forgiven hell is a real place but the only way to get to hell is to trample over the cross where Jesus paid the price to offer you forgiveness full and free and Paul knew that he also needs Timothy to know that the way on in the Christian life is the same as the way in so he knows the church in Ephesus needs to be godly and he knows every group of Christians in every age needs to be godly and he tells us the secret behind becoming godly in chapter 3 verse 16 beyond all question the mystery from which true godliness springs is great so we all we all know that we're all on tenterhooks and then he says it's all about Jesus he appeared in the flesh was vindicated by the spirit was seen by angels was preached among the nations was believed on in the world was taken up in glory in other words

[ 28 : 43 ] Timothy's teaching is to be all about Jesus the one man who displays the glory of God he appeared in the flesh he's God incarnate and divinely that second line there he was vindicated by the spirit he was raised from the dead he was seen by angels the angels who joyfully waited at the tomb that was empty to say to the women he's not here he's risen and then he was taken up in glory and now he is witnessed to by us his people as it says in line 4 he was preached among the nations as we make him known and line 5 miraculously he's believed on in the world it's a miracle when anyone puts their faith in him and it's as we make our lives and our church life all about him that we'll see more and more the majesty of God in Jesus face and he rubs off on us and he transforms us as he reshapes who we want to be so from 1st Timothy we hope that when people spend time with our church family whether it's coming here on a Sunday to visit or it's meeting us around the city that they would notice some things about us that they might remark that we seem to be generous we have a different perspective on money that we're mission shaped that we're eager to talk to people about God and to God about people and you might meet people around our church and discover that they only became a Christian quite recently because we're shaped by mission and we hope that people would say you know this church it's like a family everyone gets honoured young and old we hope these things will be noticeable and then we'd be able to say because of 1st Timothy we know why we're seeing that fruit in our church it's because this is a church that's teaching the Bible and it's a church that's all about

Jesus and when we get that right the fruit grows it's a letter about leadership and Jesus is the one leader that you can know for sure will never let you down let's pray together heavenly father we thank you that you are a generous father that you are the one who is immortal the one who dwells in unapproachable light and that you are a savior a saving God may your spirit transform us as your people that we will build our corporate life together our church life and our personal lives on the saving truth about Jesus and so may the fruit of godliness spring out from us so that we can hold up and hold out the truth about Jesus for those around us and we pray that you will save them for Jesus name for Jesus name sake amen so may so may advance up