

## SLOW FOOD: THE FIRST LETTER TO TIMOTHY (28 studies)

The so-called 'Pastoral Letters' comprise 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. (For 2 Timothy and Titus see TNV 44, January 2008.) Their Pauline authorship has been disputed but is assumed for the purpose of these studies (for the issues see commentaries; Stott comes down firmly on the side of Paul). Their date and origin are uncertain: from the internal evidence 2 Timothy was written from Rome in the mid-sixties AD (CE) as Paul anticipates the end of his life and ministry; 1 Timothy and Titus seem to be slightly earlier documents, possibly from a period after the close of *Acts* cAD 62 when he is free to travel and take the gospel to new parts of Europe, as well as encouraging existing churches. Tom Wright has called them 'The Teacher's Manual', but they shouldn't be automatically applied to schoolteaching, and 1 Timothy in particular may not exactly fit our situation. However, there is plenty here to challenge and inspire us.

Useful handbooks include: John R W Stott *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus* (BST 1996); Tom Wright *Paul for Everyone: The Pastoral Letters* (SPCK 2003); William Barclay *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon* (revised 1975); and Donald Guthrie's entry for the Pastoral Letters in *The New Bible Commentary* (IVP 4<sup>th</sup> ed 1994) pp1292ff.

Slow Food studies, which are suitable for busy teachers and others, break down a passage of Scripture into short manageable sections with one leading question on each section. They are not designed, though they may be adapted, for detailed expository analysis. Cross-references (listed in Biblical order, normally restricted to three, and sometimes offering a longer passage for context) chase up ideas in the section. The first person singular is normally used, with a view to personal application; for group study it can be pluralised. Studies may be combined as desired. **Please also refer to the supplementary study SLOW PAUL on 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus. These can be downloaded free from the TISCA website ([www.tisca.org.uk](http://www.tisca.org.uk)) where there is a wealth of other Slow Food and SLOW PAUL material – well worth checking out.**

- 1:1-2** Timothy is, let's assume, struggling with doubts about his fitness to lead the church at Ephesus. Does this chime with anything in my life just at present? If so, how does this confident opening raise my expectations of God's help in my situation? *Psalms 31.*
- 1:3-7** Teachers of all kinds love spinning their pet theories. What does Paul insist is at the core of Christian instruction? Do I need reminding about this? *Rom 1:16-17; Col 3:14.*
- 1:8-11** If trying harder to keep the moral Law doesn't justify me before God, what then is that Law for? Need I take any notice of it? *Lk 5:31-32; Rom 3:19-31.*
- 1:12-17** Am I having to deal with people who are aggressively anti-Christian? Was I like that once? Why is it so important to get our views of God straight? *Isa 1:18; Lk 23:34; Acts 26:8-16.*
- 1:18-20** Timothy's (and Paul's) opponents may have taught the twin heresies of legalism and libertarianism. If I find either of these in my context, what should I do about it (e.g. start a witch-hunt)? *2 Tim 2:14-19, 4:14-15.*
- 2:1-7** Why is prayer so vital? Who are we supposed to pray for? Do I pray effectively? *2 Cor 1:11, 4:1-6, 6:7, 10:3-5.*
- 2:8** Why do men find it difficult to pray? What gets in the way of my prayer, whether I am a man or a woman? *Ps 66:18-20; Lk 18:1; Jas 1:5-8.*
- 2:9-15** Whether or not I find Paul's teaching here applicable to today's 'equal' society, what is he saying about the true power of a woman's life and example? *Gen 1:27, 2:18; 1 Pet 3:1-7.*

- 3:1-7** Are any of Paul's criteria for overseers in the church transferable to leadership in the community in which I find myself? *Tit 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:1-5.*
- 3:8-13** If I hold responsibility of any kind, how can I train up suitable successors in my job? What key attitude does the title 'deacon(ess)' emphasise? *Lk 22:26-27; 2 Tim 2:2.*
- 3:14-16** Paul may have composed this little song about Jesus while travelling around or detained in prison. How do I keep my thoughts focused on Christ while I go about my duties, or lie awake at night? *Num 6:24-26; Ps 28:7; Ps 42:8.*
- 4:1-5** How can gratitude help me to keep a balance between asceticism and self-indulgence? *Ps 104:14-15; Eccl 2:1-11, 24-25; Col 2:23.*
- 4:6-10** How can I be an athlete for Christ? *Isa 33:23a; I Cor 9:24-27; 2 Tim 2:21.*
- 4:11-14** Timothy may have thought he lacked the status and the gifts to succeed at his job. If I sometimes feel like that, whatever my 'job' is, what considerations might encourage me? *Jn 15:16; 1 Th 5:24; 1 Jn 4:17b.*
- 4:15-16** I may be saved, but am I safe? *2 Pet 1:3-11.*
- 5:1-2** Are my standards of holiness and love set high enough? *Job 31:1-12; Rom 12:9-21.*
- 5:3-8** Do I regard my professional duties as more important than normal family obligations? *Prov 11:24-25, 29-30; Mk 7:9-13.*
- 5:9-16** Am I aware of the pressures on Christians who have lost their 'other half' in middle or later age? What help can be given them? *Ps 68:5; Lk 7:11-17; Jas 1:27.*
- 5:17-21** Do I have my favourites? Do I treat them differently from others? *Gen 37:3-4; Dt 10:17; Acts 10:34.*
- 5:22-25** Do I look after myself properly? To whom am I ultimately responsible? *Acts 27:33-38; Phil 1:20-25; 1 Pet 1:15-16.*
- 6:1-2a** Do I expect to be treated favourably as an employee just because I am a Christian? *Col 3:22-25; Philem 16.*
- 6:2b-5** How can I teach soundly without being opinionated? *Rom 15:14-17; 1 Cor 8:1-3; Phil 2:12-14.*
- 6:6-10** Am I free from the love of money? *Ps 19:12-14; Prov 30:7-9; Phil 4:11-13.*
- 6:11-12** How can I be God's man or woman in the part of the world where he has stationed me? *Isa 61:1-4; 2 Tim 4:7.*
- 6:13-16** How much does Christ's return affect my attitude to earthly success? *Mk 14:61-62; 1 Cor 4:1-5; Phil 3:20.*
- 6:17-19** Why has God given me my particular level of affluence? *Exod 3:8; Dt 8:17-18; Prov 8:18-21; Eccl 5:10, 19; Mt 27:57-60; Rev 3:17-18.*
- 6:20-21** Why do Christian teachers sometimes go off the rails? *Rom 11:20; 1 Cor 10:12; 2 Cor 12:9.*
- Review** At what point do Timothy's needs line up with mine? What particular encouragements or warnings have I been given in relation to my service for Christ?