

## SLOW PAUL: THINKING THROUGH THE PASTORAL LETTERS

*Authorship.* Nobody is going to solve overnight the problem of the Pastoral letters (are they actually written by Paul?). I'm not even going to try. We have to proceed on assumptions where there is inadequate contextual evidence, so if the reader is prepared to go along with the imaginative scenario, these letters still have devotional and practical value. If they come towards the end of his life after all his beatings and imprisonments and frustrations with church after church – not to mention the relentless opposition from religious opponents – this should account for a certain peremptoriness and even grumpiness in the writing, while the classic Pauline debt to grace and his concerned and affectionate relationship with Timothy still shine through.

So we're going to follow the usual *Slow Food* line, which is to unpack the intentions and assumptions behind this letter *as if* it were written by Paul. If anyone objects, there's plenty else to study – art is long, life is short. On some of the thornier issues which are dealt with in this letter, such as church organisation and women's leadership, my effort to interpret Paul's instructions should not be taken as a personal view of whether the Holy Spirit intends that they should be universally valid. As with Corinth, there may be a case for limiting their application to the Ephesian church of his day. Sometimes we simply don't know enough about the background circumstances of which both the writer and his recipient would have been well aware.

*Date, provenance and purpose.* We can only speculate on these, as there is no internal or external evidence apart from the address to Timothy. The reference to Macedonia and Ephesus in 1:3 does not imply that their last meeting was a recent one, though it may well have been. There are no mentions of imprisonment or any other circumstances which might point to Rome as the place of writing, as there are in 2 Timothy. It may well be that Paul was released after the end of his relatively light Roman imprisonment noted at the end of Acts, and (as suggested by allusions to Nicopolis and Troas in Titus and 2 Timothy) that he continued to travel widely in the cause of evangelistic and pastoral mission, before being finally rearrested and executed. Thus the letter could have been written more or less anywhere. This would place it in the earlier sixties AD, before the Neronian persecution which began in the summer of 64 (Tacitus *Annals* 15:44) and which led to widespread decimation of the church not only in Rome but probably also in the Eastern provinces of the Empire (cf 1 Pet 1:1, 6). As to the occasion of writing, the reference to Timothy's stomach ailment in 5:23 is the strongest hint that Paul is answering a recent message from Timothy, which might well have included doubts about his own fitness to lead the Ephesian church and an account of problems there.

As with other *Slow Paul* pieces, the *Holy Bible, New International Version* (2011) (NIV) is reproduced before each section for ease of reference. The section headings are there simply to break up the text. For the rationale of this free-roaming approach please see *Slow Paul: Thinking through Colossians*.

### I TIMOTHY

**1:1-2** *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Saviour and of Christ Jesus our hope,<sup>2</sup> To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

#### **This letter is for you**

[1:1-2] Timothy, this letter is for you and for all who are appointed to lead and manage a Christian congregation. It's from Paul, who has been your father in the faith ever since that first visit to Lystra. At the same time, it's from the Lord, our One True God who has come down to where we are and who never fails to respond to our cries for help. We get to the end of our resources with disaster staring at us, and there's Jesus telling us he's in control and has full authority over everything in heaven and on earth. Our despair changes to a settled optimism as we face the future with renewed confidence.

Timothy, I need this confidence as much as you do. I am under constant attack from those who challenge my right to tell anyone what to do. Again and again I have to go back to those three days

in Damascus (a long time ago now but still as vivid as though it happened this morning) when I met the Lord Jesus, and instead of consigning me to the rubbish-heap he picked me up and told me I was being sent as his witness to Gentile and Jew alike. More of that in a moment; but I never cease to be amazed that he transformed me from apostate to apostle by the simple command, 'Stand on your feet!' Ever since that moment I've known and relied upon his unconditional love, his forbearance for my many shortcomings, and the utter certainty that I can leave all my problems with him and face the world with serenity.

Timothy, you're not just another of my converts – you're solid gold through and through. We've served the cause of the gospel together so often and now you're at Ephesus heading up the kingdom work there, with all those house churches to supervise, and let's face it, you're under enormous pressure. I just want you to know from the outset that the gospel is still the same as it was thirty years ago: God comes to us in Jesus and offers us a love we could never qualify for, a freedom from sin's guilt and power fully achieved on the cross, and a friendship with a living Lord who walks with us through all the stresses and strains of life.

So – what's new?

**1:3-7** <sup>3</sup> 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 <sup>4</sup> or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work – which is by faith. <sup>5</sup> The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. <sup>6</sup> Some have departed from these and turned to meaningless talk. <sup>7</sup> They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

### **Speculative teaching**

[1:3-4] I've always thought you were meant to be in Ephesus for the long haul. I told you as much on that occasion when I was on my way into Northern Greece. You said you thought it was too big a job for you and you couldn't cope with all the powerful characters who were distorting the simple gospel and substituting their own version of it. Now you tell me that nothing's changed, in fact it's worse than ever: the Lord's people are being force-fed with absurd miracle stories about Jesus' childhood, and being made to learn impossibly long strings of names of remote ancestors and all that kind of thing; and quite rightly you object that rather than centring on God's salvation through faith, which is the way he has chosen to bring men and women to know him, everybody is arguing about obscure theories propounded by rabbinical scholars, travelling philosophers and heaven knows who else. Well, you and I wrote letter after letter to the churches in Asia dealing with all that, and surprise surprise, it's raising its ugly head again.

[1:5] There's a simple test for all such speculative teaching. Does it promote love as the one thing needful? I don't mean a soppy sentimentality where anything goes as long as we're all one happy family together. I mean a disciplined affection issuing from a heart that is consecrated to the Lord and that takes no account of how good-looking or charming people are. I mean a scrupulous attention to morality that doesn't push the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. I mean a transparency in personal relationships that arises naturally from a simple faith in Jesus. This kind of love binds everyone together with Christ at the centre.

[1:6] They've missed it by miles, these charlatans. They haven't a clue what they're talking about. They think they're on God's kingdom highway when they're utterly lost in a tangle of byways and dead ends. [1:7] They make grandiose claims about expounding the timeless Torah, and all the time they don't even know the meaning of the words they use. They deliver verdicts from on high

with great intensity, while being completely blind to what the Spirit is really trying to teach us in God's word.

**1:8-11** <sup>8</sup> *We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.* <sup>9</sup> *We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers,* <sup>10</sup> *the sexually immoral, for those practising homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers – and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine* <sup>11</sup> *that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.*

### **The real point of the Law**

[1:8] I'm not rubbishing the Law, as you and I know perfectly well. But it can ever so subtly be misused. As soon as you start thinking (and teaching) that the more scrupulously you perform the multitude of commandments, the closer you are getting to the heart of God, you're a lost soul. The purpose of this majestic and wonderful Mosaic system is to turn the searchlight on human hearts, to show how far we all are from the Divine glory. [1:9] As I've declared in city after city, synagogue after synagogue, no one can justify themselves by moral achievement. What did the Lord Jesus say to all those crooks and mafia bosses round Levi's table? Not, 'you've got to mend your ways then God will let you into heaven,' but 'You're sick and I'm the only one who can make you well.'

So what's the point of the Law? It's to preempt judgment day. It's to declare God's settled and permanent antipathy to all the evils that plague mankind. On the Day of denouement that is most certainly coming for every soul who has ever lived, God is going to show people the true effect their lives have had on those around them. 'You sir, you madam, you thought you could go your own sweet way without regard for anyone else – look what wreckage you've caused! Let me just go through the ten commandments and see how you've squared up. One God before all others? You've put yourself at the control centre of your life and left me on the outside. No idol worship? You've set up your own gods and goddesses of money, power and pleasure. Honouring my name? You've used it as a swearword. My special day? You've profaned it with worldly pursuits. Respecting your parents? You've exploited their generosity, made their lives a misery and hurried them to an early grave. As for human life, even if you haven't actually murdered anybody, you've blighted people's existence with your hate-filled words and attitudes. As for sexual faithfulness, you've pursued your lust without regard to marital status, gender distinctions or age boundaries. You've cynically manipulated people into serving your own selfish schemes, as surely as any kidnapper or slave-trader. You've spun plausible stories without regard for truth, and broken solemn promises. Shall I go on – or do you now realise that you are the complete opposite of the spiritually and morally healthy person I created you to be, and have continually urged you to be through childhood training, through precept and example, through the insistent demands of your own conscience?'

That's what the Law is for: to bring home to people the seriousness of their condition, and to bring people under judgment now so that they won't have to face it ultimately. [1:11] And that's what the Gospel is for: to open the eyes of people's hearts to the beauty of God's goodness and the supreme desirability of eternal life in his presence, and to bring them face to face with Christ, as happened to me. But instead of consigning me to outer darkness as I deserved, he commissioned me to shine the light of his love into others' darkness. How can I betray his trust by blunting the gospel with a 'try harder and you'll be okay' prescription, or by papering over the huge divide between God's holiness and our human corruption?

**1:12-17** <sup>12</sup> *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service.* <sup>13</sup> *Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.* <sup>14</sup> *The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*

<sup>15</sup> *Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst.* <sup>16</sup> *But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.* <sup>17</sup> *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

### **The story of my conversion**

[1:12] Timothy, you're feeling your own frailty. Well, so did I, and I do still. It's not something to be ashamed of; on the contrary, it is an essential part of my testimony to what the Lord has done for me. You may be so used to regarding me as your father in the faith and your senior partner in the work of the kingdom, that you've forgotten the massive pit from which I was rescued. Right – forgive me for going over the well-known story of my conversion, but it may just help you to realise that if he can do it with me, then he's certainly more than able to do it for you.

How do I keep going? It's all thanks to the presence and power of the Lord Jesus in my life. He said, 'I've got a job for you to do for me, and I know you won't give up halfway through.' [1:13] I had been denouncing the claims of Jesus to be the Father's Son and himself divine, and angrily arresting anyone who made the same claim, even forcing some of them to deny their faith. I pursued those poor Christian believers so relentlessly that they weren't safe from me anywhere; I imprisoned them, I had them beaten up, and had some of them 'judicially' executed, beginning of course with the blessed Stephen. How could God possibly forgive such crimes against his Son and his people? Yet he did. Looking back, I suppose I was as ignorant as those soldiers whom the Lord forgave as they were banging great nails through his wrists and ankles. But how could he possibly overlook such monstrous pride and cynical unbelief? Well, that's our God for you. I was blinded by an obsessive passion for doing what I thought was God's will, and he opened my eyes to my true condition.

[1:14] If you ever doubt the overwhelming generosity and goodness of the Lord our God, Timothy, just see how faithfully and how lovingly he met me in his Chosen One, Jesus. [1:15] He was only being true to his word. Right from the start he promised a Saviour who at terrible cost to himself would draw the sting of death and open the way back to the tree of life; and he made clear that this promise would be available to all members of the lost human race. I have to say without any satisfaction that when I thought I was closer to God than most of my contemporaries, I was actually as far from him as the worst sinner upon earth. [1:16] Yet he decided to pardon me – why? I can only conclude that he wanted to show the world how far he was prepared to go in forgiving flagrant criminality, and he chose me as his demonstration model.

You see, if you're going to make faith the qualification for inheriting the divine life that knows no end, and if you're going to issue the invitation to all sorts and conditions of mankind, they're going to need a guarantee that their previous lifestyle hasn't ruled them out of consideration. 'I'm far too bad for God to want me with him in heaven.' Well, look at Saul, set on reducing the infant church to smithereens and eradicating the name of his Messiah from the memory of mankind. If the Lord could wash this particular scarlet sinner as white as snow, perhaps after all he could do the same for you. There's hope for everyone.

## The kind of God we have

[1:17] That's the kind of God we have. That's the heart that beats at the centre of the Universe, always has done, always will do. He's way beyond our conceptions in the flawlessness of his character; even the angels shield their eyes in his presence Isa 6:2. Yet he's made himself visible to the eyes of faith; we can meet him in Jesus, and that's what I've done. It's not as if there are two Gods, one terrifyingly separate from us, the other moving into our lives and offering his friendship. He's the same Lord, the only God there is. Join with me in worshipping and adoring this God-King of ours, whose glory is from everlasting to everlasting and whose beauty is beyond praise. Tell me you believe it's true, because it is.

**1:18-20** <sup>18</sup> Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well, <sup>19</sup> holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to their faith. <sup>20</sup> Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

## Straight talking

[1:18] All this may appear to be a digression and to be focussing on my highly unusual experience. But it's relevant to you too, my dear Timothy. I've had a paternal affection for you from the very start, and you've showed a filial faithfulness for me over the years, but it doesn't mean we can't do some straight talking when it's needed. I'm simply not going to let you walk away with the job only half finished, with the campaign having hardly reached its midway stage. I remember vividly when we were praying and laying hands on you, in order to determine your line of service, several people spoke out with prophetic insight, indicating that not only did you have a talent for leading people to Christ, but you had a leadership gift which one day would be used by the Lord in a key situation. Well, that situation's Ephesus.

I know it's a battle. But didn't the Lord warn us that he came not just to bring peace, but a sword as well? You're not in this business for a rest-cure. [1:19] You're fighting on two fronts, doctrinal and behavioural. You're establishing a gospel system of justification by faith, which flies in the face of the institutional legalists, who want change as they want a hole in the head. Human pride simply can't accept that God in Christ has done everything necessary for our salvation, and all we need to do it to accept it gratefully. Meanwhile in the other front you are battling it out with the ever so cool libertarians, who can't see any point in strict morality and who think that conscience is a left-over from the dim and distant past. And it's so hard when both these trends are represented by people in your own church fellowships. It's like sailing a boat in a rough sea along a narrow channel, constantly on the alert to avoid being dashed on the rocks on either side, and you're simultaneously wrestling with members of your own crew who want to take over the tiller. The coast is littered with the shipwrecks of those who have erred in one direction or the other.

## Danger men

[1:20] Yes, we both know who we're thinking of – Hymenaeus and Alexander, your (and my) principal bête-noires. The former, as we know all too well, goes around telling people that they needn't worry about a future resurrection and judgment, because if we've put our trust in Christ we've already been through all that, so it doesn't matter if we sin to our hearts' content. He couldn't be more wrong. Meanwhile the other fellow, who is even more dangerous, accuses us of loosening the disciples' hold on the essential Jewish law and even suggests that Christ himself is encouraging moral laxitude. These both fly in the face of the gospel we have always proclaimed.

You and I have got to be tough with such people. In fact I've fasted and prayed over this, and I've asked the Lord to allow Satan to blight their lives. They've got to realise that what they're teaching is bringing the Lord's name into serious disrepute, and if it means bitterly strong discipline, then so be it, as long as they recant and come back into line. Notice that I've left it for God to take action – don't for a moment think that you've got to deliver their punishment personally. We don't want a witch-hunt, we want a healthy church which fears the Lord and obeys his revealed word.

*2:1-7<sup>1</sup> I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people –  
<sup>2</sup> for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.<sup>3</sup>  
This is good, and pleases God our Saviour,<sup>4</sup> who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of  
the truth.<sup>5</sup> For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,<sup>6</sup> who  
gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.<sup>7</sup> And for this  
purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle – I am telling the truth, I am not lying – and a true and  
faithful teacher of the Gentiles.*

### **Powerhouse of prayer**

[2:1] So what are the marks of a healthy church? Well, first and foremost it should be a powerhouse of prayer. There is so much praying to be done, because this is the way God wants to run his world, with people loyal to the kingdom bringing all sorts of situations to him and asking him to act in healing, love and power. There are general prayers and there are particular prayers; there's wordless adoration as well as specific intercession; there's thanksgiving for what he has done and for what he's about to do; and nobody, absolutely nobody in the whole wide world, is ruled out as a subject for prayer. [2:2] This includes the leaders of the nations who bear such a heavy responsibility for their people, and it's also important to bear up to God all who hold authority in whatever sense, down to your boss to whom you are immediately answerable. Most people grumble about 'the government' or 'the management', but you're to be different – you can beam light and guidance into their lives direct from God. This means, incidentally, that prayer isn't just something you do when the church is gathered on God's special day; it's a whole-life function of the scattered church, wherever anyone spends their time in various segments of society. The point is that thanks to the Fall we have as a human race lost touch with our Maker and Director, with the inevitable consequence that our lives are turbulent and storm-tossed when they should be harmonious and carefree, like the rowers in a great seagoing ship acting in perfect unison to sweep the craft dynamically forward under the wise direction of their Captain and Master.

### **The bottom line**

[2:3] We pray, don't we, for the Father's will to be done on earth just as it is in heaven. This isn't a kind of fatalistic resignation to an impersonal force that regulates the universe without any reference to the wishes and feelings of its inhabitants. It's making direct contact with a living and loving God who is in the business of rescuing people from the evil that has made a disaster area of their lives. It's appealing to the One who sees things as they are, to reclaim situations and characters that apparently have no hope of redemption. [2:4] It's not for us to judge anybody's potential for salvation; the bottom line is that God does not actively will the destruction of one single human soul, in fact he is passionately concerned that every creature he has ever made should come to know him as Lord and submit their lives to his eternally good purposes. If this means that they have to change their attitude to him, and acknowledge the truth of his word that they have resisted for so long (or never heard in the first place), then he is going to stop at nothing to shine his light into their hearts with the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

[2:5-6] I used the word 'truth' just now and I meant it. God is the One who is there. The solid fact round which the universe revolves. We don't create our own individual gods each according to our own whim. The God who is really God laid himself on the line to heal the yawning gap between himself and his alienated creatures. He became a human person to give us back the chance of becoming divine. The man we call Jesus is God's unique self-expression in flesh, the Supreme Giver offering the supreme gift of himself. On the cross he paid the full ransom-price for a captive race, exchanging his death for my life, unlocking the fetters of slavery to sin and self-will. Now is the time for telling everyone about this to the ends of the earth, nation by nation, person by person, generation by generation, constantly retranslating the message into each person's native idiom and coming to each one in their hour of need.

[2:7] I myself am an appointed servant of this truth, a voice crying in the wilderness, a commissioned agent of Christ, whatever you like to call it. People have tried to suggest that I've made it all up, that I'm following a delusion, and that I ought to drop all this play-acting and revert to my previous life as a servant of the Law of Moses. They couldn't be more wrong. I've been given a totally new life-plan, and that is to reach the non-Jewish world with the news of what God has done in Jesus, to get them to believe what is so gloriously true. Yes, the Lord of reality has entrusted me with his rock-solid promise: 'Believe in Jesus Christ, and live.' And people are flocking into the kingdom from all quarters. If what you and I preach isn't true, Timothy, an awful lot of folk are going to feel seriously let down.

2:8 <sup>8</sup> *I want men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.*

### **Why men don't pray**

[2:8] We were asking what are the marks of a healthy church, and we started talking about prayer, then we realised that the absolutely prime feature of any church should be that it's based foursquare on the truth of the gospel. There's no point in prayer or anything else if God isn't actually bothered about whether people are saved or not. But he is, and he's sent Jesus to die for us, and that's the rock beneath our feet. That's how we can pray with any kind of confidence. Because that's what God wants in this world, and prayer is telling him we want it as well.

And I get the feeling that women are much better at praying than men are. Men tend to let other things get in the way of a simple, direct faith in God. Or they make a rigid separation between the sacred and the secular and think that prayer is something you only do in church in a service on the Lord's special day – when in fact it's something you can do anywhere, as I've already said. Also men like to be doing things with their hands and they privately think prayer is sitting around idly without achieving anything. What a mistake – the best thing you can do with your hands is to lift them up to God to receive heaven's blessings and transmit them into life on earth. Only they've got to be clean hands. I don't mean farmers or mechanics have to wash every time they pray; what I do mean is that we can't expect God to hear us if we're clinging to something we know isn't pure in his sight.

Other things that tend to get in the way of the men in the church praying effectively (and I should know because I'm a man myself) are a sense of resentment against God and a tendency to be combative over points of doctrine. We find it difficult to accept that God has allowed evil as well as good into his creation, and this diminishes our faith in God's goodness and his capacity to right wrongs. Or we are privately critical of other people's prayers, particularly where the work of the Spirit is being sought, and instead of uniting behind a spoken prayer we pick holes in its orthodoxy. I just wish we could all remember that time and place are no barrier to having direct access into God's holy presence.

**2:9-15** <sup>9</sup> I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, <sup>10</sup> but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. <sup>11</sup> A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. <sup>12</sup> I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. <sup>13</sup> For Adam was formed first, then Eve. <sup>14</sup> And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. <sup>15</sup> But women will be saved through childbearing – if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

### **Dressing for the occasion**

[2:9] I gather there are some fairly formidable women converts in Ephesus! That's wonderful news, particularly if they and their husbands are willing to throw their houses open for regular church meetings. However, your jocular reference to 'dressing for the occasion' suggests that some of them are treating the Lord's Day as an opportunity for flaunting the latest fashions and for competing with one another in elaborate hairdos, stylish costumes and displays of jewellery that are more appropriate for city banquets or society weddings than for worship meetings. It's so important that class distinctions are invisible in the body of Christ and that nobody, however humble their origin, should be discouraged from attending. It's hard enough for slaves and freed folk to creep unobtrusively into someone's grand mansion, without their being confronted by a hostess decked out like the Emperor's wife. I think the rule should be that we dress down, rather than up, for Christian gatherings. This may entail a certain amount of self-sacrifice for society hostesses, but it's a powerful witness. [2:10] It emphasises the primacy of inner character over outward impression; and it buttresses our emphasis on practical deeds of charity and mercy, of which many of these women are of course shining exponents. If we're spending more on our appearance than on the needs of the poor, there's something wrong. You and I know there is plenty of poverty even in the glittering cultural centres of provinces like Asia; and there are straws in the wind suggesting that if active persecution becomes more prevalent, our churches are going to have to make real sacrifices in order to support families where the main breadwinner is imprisoned (or worse) for the sake of Christ.

### **Potential women teachers?**

[2:11-12] I'm interested that you consider some of these church patronesses to be potential teachers. This is fine when husband and wife are called to be joint instructors in a particular situation (I'm thinking of Priscilla and Aquila with Apollos), but I think it's pushing the boat out to allow women authoritative teaching roles within the church on a regular basis. The Jewish tradition has always been quite firm on this: even wives like Sarah had to learn that the word of the Lord is entrusted to the male head of the family, and though she may disagree with him strongly, his is the ultimate responsibility for preserving peace in the household and seeking the Lord's will for the whole family unit. The church is the Lord's household and the same applies. Think back to the story of Hagar and Ishmael, when Abraham is tempted to doubt the Lord's promise of a male heir and meekly follows the advice of his wife, leading to serious dissension and turmoil. [2:13-14] Think even further back to the creation stories. Both accounts emphasise the joint role of husband and wife in holding authority over the creatures of the earth; but it is quite clear from the prior formation of Adam that the onus of leadership and overall authority is laid upon the male. When the situation becomes topsy-turvy, with Eve having her trust in God's goodness eroded by the craftiness of the serpent (himself only a creature), and Adam in turn allowing his judgment to be clouded by his wife's insistence, then all hell breaks loose (literally).



[2:15] I see the tasks of man and woman to be complementary: she has the huge responsibility of childbearing and bringing up a family; and even after the Fall, when the pain and peril of motherhood is greatly increased, God's grace ensures that (if so be his will) she comes through it safely. Not only so, but eventually she gives birth to the Saviour. She thus becomes a wonderful example of wholehearted trust in the Lord; her husband is encouraged and humbled by her love, her personal holiness radiates out to all around, and the self-discipline she develops to cope with all her daily pressures is an inspiration to the whole church. Contrast the malign influence of a Jezebel when she usurps male authority and causes endless chaos. I know that in Christ we regain the equality of status that existed before the Fall, but all the same I feel strongly that we shouldn't throw caution to the winds where church organisation is concerned.

**3:1-7** <sup>1</sup> Here is a trustworthy saying: whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. <sup>2</sup> Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, <sup>3</sup> not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. <sup>4</sup> He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. <sup>5</sup> (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) <sup>6</sup> He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. <sup>7</sup> He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

### **Interviewing for eldership**

[3:1] Well, we seem to be on the question of suitability for leadership, so let's think about the sort of people whom God might be calling to oversee his flock. The idea of the 'good shepherd' runs right back through Scripture and applies supremely to our Lord Jesus himself. God wants under-shepherds who will be faithful, so if someone feels God is calling them to this task and is passionate to do it, they can be reassured that it's not only a job thoroughly worth doing, it's actually working under the direction of the Lord himself. [3:2] Right then – you're interviewing someone for eldership in a church or group of churches – what questions are you going to ask them? 'Are you a person of exemplary character? (That's a fast one to start with!) Are you, sir, faithful to your wife? Have you ever been divorced, and if so, were you the innocent party? Do you drink alcohol, and if so, in what strength and quantities? Do you keep your temper under control at all times? Do you dress appropriately to the occasion, whether formal or informal? Are you known as someone who is sociable and hospitable? Do you have a talent for teaching, and do your students or hearers find your style clear and attractive?' and so on. [3:3] If they're evasive on the subject of drink or any kind of addictive substances, keep up the pressure till you've got the truth out of them. The same applies to violence, especially in family relationships: do they make a habit of beating their children or throwing things at their partner? The kind of person we want in charge of an all-age church should be approachable and courteous, and not likely to lash out or make provocative remarks. Again, you could press them gently on the subject of finance and try to discover if personal profit is going to affect their policy decisions. [3:4] If the general opinion is that such-and-such a man is irresponsible when it comes to running his family, and his children run riot and don't take any notice of what he tells them, that's a fairly good indication that he shouldn't be in charge of God's household either, because he will need to deal firmly with dissident elements, as you will readily appreciate! Churches are families writ large, as I've said, and under the wrong leadership they can go haywire.

[3:6] Now for a tricky question: 'How long have you known the Lord?' If someone hasn't been a committed disciple for all that long, they may not be able to deal with the insidious nature of

pride, which slithers into even our holiest moments of devotion and says 'Look what a fine Christian you are!' I need hardly remind you that this is devilish in origin and it will alter the whole focus of a person's ministry from the glory of God to the promotion of me. [3:7] While we're on the subject of the devil's tactics, it's worth asking a few people unconnected with the church (you should have good non-Christian friends, incidentally) what they think of your candidate. Outsiders' opinions matter, and you don't want your pastor's name splashed all over the local press for indiscretions or worse. It's very reassuring when a church leader is respected in the local community.

**3:8-13** <sup>8</sup> *In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.* <sup>9</sup> *They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.* <sup>10</sup> *They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.* <sup>11</sup> *In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.* <sup>12</sup> *A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well.* <sup>13</sup> *Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.*

### **Interviewing for the diaconate**

[3:8] Since this is becoming something of a briefing paper on church organisation, I'd better go on to cover the deacons. These men and women have practical functions in the church delegated to them by the eldership, but in terms of character suitability the criteria are very much the same. (Please don't think I'm advocating any kind of hierarchy in the body of Christ: remember that the Lord Jesus himself described himself as a 'deacon', and insisted that we should all serve one another.) Faithful servant-character is shown in a number of ways: in dignity of personal bearing, in transparent sincerity of speech, in moderate consumption of alcoholic drink and in not regarding financial acquisition as their be-all and end-all. [3:9-10] They should be doctrinally orthodox (which is not to say that any of us has ever sounded the true depths of our faith – there's always more to learn!) and have no stains on their record of moral behaviour. It's worth asking them some frank questions in these areas: have they ever been accused of holding heretical views on mainline teachings? Do they have anything on their conscience as far as relationships with others are concerned? If there's room for doubt, they can always be given a probationary period of service before they take on full responsibility. In fact it's a very good idea for every officer in the church to have an understudy in their particular area of duty, not only in case they are suddenly removed from the scene but also to test out suitability and initiate them into the demands of the job.

[3:11] The same requirements apply to women deacons. Women are great conversationalists and networkers, and tend to be less reserved than most men. Their bouncy sense of humour is very refreshing, but they must be capable of being serious when the situation requires it. Confidentiality is important too, when it comes to sharing intimate information for the purpose of prayer – this must never become mere tittle-tattle or worse, the deliberate spreading of unhelpful gossip. The same rules about alcohol apply as for men. As for personal relationships, they need to show proper restraint; forwardness and flirting are out of the question.

[3:12] I need hardly say that this applies to male deacons too. It's not just the elders who need to show marital faithfulness; in fact, family solidarity is just as important for deacons. Church business isn't to be an excuse for failing to attend to the fair-minded disciplining of their children, nor to the efficient running of their household. [3:13] I see the diaconate as a training-ground for future leadership: if they make a good fist of it at this initial level they can proceed to greater things (again, I'm talking about responsibility, not hierarchy). And as they gain confidence in

talking to people about the things of Jesus Christ, they are more likely to develop into articulate speakers and resilient proponents of the faith.

**3:14-16** <sup>14</sup> *Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you with these instructions so that,* <sup>15</sup> *if I am delayed, you will 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.* <sup>16</sup> *Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great: 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.*

### **A modern psalm**

[3:14-15] You may be wondering why I'm going into all this detail when I'm planning to pay you a visit in a few weeks' time! Well, you know me well enough. I tend to get diverted to pastures new, or to extend my stay in a particular centre when I see opportunities opening up, or crises looming. I just get the feeling that you would like things set down in black and white as far as managing a city-wide church is concerned. We live in an age of shifting values and competing philosophies and creeds, and right in the midst of all the ferment the living God is bringing men and women to know him through the witness of his people; the risen Christ is building his Church, laying earthquake-proof foundations, constructing pillars that will stand foursquare against the storms of unbelief and error.

[3:16] Timothy, don't be put off your stride by all the ideas swirling around in a place like Ephesus. Stick to your main task, which is to establish a mature body of believers, united in the worship of God and the knowledge of the heart-shattering secret of Christ. As I travel around, or get detained in yet another squalid jail, I compose what one might call modern psalms to remind myself of the inexhaustible treasures we have in our Lord Jesus. Can I share this one with you:

'Deathless God revealed in human frame,  
Full of Spirit, flawless sacrifice,  
Witnessed by angels through death you came;  
Now nations hear how you paid the price.  
Far-off peoples acknowledge your name,  
Gloriously reigning in Paradise.'

Not the greatest poetry ever written, but it keeps me singing.

**4:1-5** <sup>1</sup> *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.* <sup>2</sup> *Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.* <sup>3</sup> *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.* <sup>4</sup> *For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,* <sup>5</sup> *because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.*

### **Falsehood masquerading as truth**

[4:1-2] Now for these 'alternative' opinion-mongers you tell me you have to cope with. This is entirely in line with what the Spirit tells us through Scripture and prophecy, and you mustn't be thrown off balance by it. As we build towards the Lord's return (and we've been doing that ever since Pentecost) all kinds of divergent theories are going to circulate and, sadly, many professedly Christian people are going to be affected by them and even lose their faith completely. You mustn't be surprised if in the spiritual market-place, with hungry and thirsty folk desperately looking for sustenance, pedlars and hucksters are going to turn up offering bread made with

sawdust and wine brewed from dishwater. This is all part of the spiritual battle and you must expect the enemy to try to infiltrate your own lines, dressed up as your allies and using all the right language.

Yes, if you're on the side of the truth you're going to meet falsehood masquerading as the genuine article. These people are driven by their own agenda and all else is subordinated to that; they've been listening to the dictates of their own egos for so long that the Spirit hasn't a chance of getting through to them where they're going wrong. [4:3] I'll give you a couple of examples of this which you've doubtless come across. I've met it elsewhere in your province. In our mainstream teaching we make no bones about sexual abstinence and marital faithfulness – so up come these folk quoting something I've said or written about not letting physical desire take over your relationship, and going 'Oh we do so agree with you Paul. Men and women ought to be able to be close friends in Christ without hooking up together. Marriage itself is really a concession to our weakness, isn't it! If you're a really keen Christian you ought to be able to control your affections and rise above earthly lusts – especially if you're going to be a leader in the church.' Heard that anywhere? Hit that nonsense on the head – marriage is ordained by God and sanctified as his precious gift.

Here's another example: going without food. We teach that according to the example of the Lord Jesus, Christians may profit spiritually from occasional and disciplined abstinence from their regular nourishment. Along come these ever-so-spiritual brethren with Manuals of the Higher Life and all kinds of rules and regulations about levels of self-denial and ascents to the Divine Closeness. Don't get swept along with all this ascetic self-indulgence, which only ministers to human pride. Go back to the original creation which the Lord declared to be so very good. Did he slap a ban on enjoying a decent meal? No, he invited mankind to partake of the food he provided in such abundance, on the assumption that they would be grateful to him and trust him to supply their needs on both physical and spiritual levels. It's not those who emphasise the separation of body and soul who have a grasp on the truth, it's those who understand the interdependence of soul and body. In the new creation we're not going to be disembodied spirits, we're going to have resurrection bodies, designed to live a supercharged existence amid the eternal joys prepared by God.

### **Gratitude**

[4:4] If you want a rule that binds the earthly and the heavenly in the bundle of life, try this one: gratitude. Rejoice in the richness and wonder of the natural creation. Appreciate the generosity of the great Giver of all things. Nothing in the non-human creation is or can be morally evil. It's our selfishness that taints and twists the purity of God's gifts. [4:5] But get hold of this, too: it's our redeemed humanity that is designed to reclaim the material world for Christ. As we spread the word of God, and intercede for all classes and conditions of people, we exert a healing power within a physical creation that is longing to share our release from sin. Next time you sit down to a frugal meal, or to a lavish banquet for that matter, recall one of Scripture's covenant promises, and breathe a simple prayer of thanksgiving. That's the way to shut the mouths of these self-appointed gurus with their gaunt faces and handbooks of holiness.

**4:6-8** <sup>6</sup> *If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, 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.* <sup>7</sup> *Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.* <sup>8</sup> *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.*

## **Athlete for Christ**

[4:6] Don't get me wrong: I'm not trying to knock celibates or vegetarians, and I'm certainly not undermining orthodox sanctification teaching. I'm simply reassuring you that you can be useful to the Master, not by eradicating every noxious weed from the harvest field, but by planting good, wholesome wheat for the nourishment of your people. Timothy, you have two massive advantages. The first is that you've been brought up in a family where the Scriptures have been faithfully treasured and taught; you were applying the great covenant promises to the ups and downs of your young life even before you ever heard of Jesus Christ. The second is that, though I say it myself, you've heard the gospel from the horse's mouth – you've travelled with me and hammered out the basics of the faith in one difficult situation after another. [4:7] But there are all kinds of unhelpful teachings flying around, from Jewish family traditions which have no relevance to the modern generation and actually militate against our freedom in Christ, to incitements to permissiveness which make a mockery of our standards of morality.

Don't abandon your strict regime of personal training. Be an athlete for Christ. Set your heart, not on popular acclaim nor superficial triumphs, but on long-term conformity to the Divine character and will. [4:8] Training for earthly contests like the Olympic games may put you in superb physical condition in the short-term, but the disciplines of the Spirit bring far greater benefit, fulfilling both human and divine potential. They bring you fulness of life here and now in this world, while all the time they are preparing you for a different plane of existence, resurrection living in the new Jerusalem. It's coming! Keep your hopes high.

**4:9-10** <sup>9</sup> *This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.* <sup>10</sup> *That is why we labour and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all people, and especially of those who believe.*

## **Keeping them believing**

[4:9] I know all this seems desperately hard to believe at times, or out of the reach of any but the rarest saint. But it's absolutely true, and it's for the rank-and-file as well as for the leaders. [4:10] It's why I travel such vast distances all round the Empire, and endure all kinds of privations and frustrations, and not only I but my loyal team of fellow-evangelists. The bottom line is that there is one living God, and he saves us in Christ. The invitation to the kingdom of heaven is for absolutely everyone. But the race isn't over at the starting-blocks, it continues to the finishing-post. That's why your work is even more vital than mine: I might bring new nations into the church, but people like you have got to work long-term at keeping them believing, and there are forces out there that don't want that to happen, not in the slightest.

**4:11-14** <sup>11</sup> *Command and teach these things.* <sup>12</sup> *Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.* <sup>13</sup> *Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.* <sup>14</sup> *Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.*

## **Your authority is Christ's**

[4:11] 'OK,' you may be saying, 'you've encouraged me to stay in training myself, but I still feel I lack the authority to tell others how to conduct their lives and what they should believe.' Don't wait till you feel strong enough – just go on doing it! You've got the authority already, and it's not your authority, it's the Lord Jesus Christ's. It's not you telling people how to behave and what to believe, it's the Lord doing it through you. If you opt out, he's got to start all over again with

someone else. [4:12] Yes, I know you're actually younger than most of your flock, but so were David, Samuel, Jeremiah. The Lord himself was younger than Simon Peter or Nathaniel. I know the local synagogue elders cut pretty impressive figures, but you're not there simply to be a stuffed shirt – they will respect you and the church all the more if they realise the impact of your example. You're standing in for Christ there in Ephesus. When you speak, it's his voice they hear; when you conduct yourself in public, it's the Lord Jesus in their midst again; when you care for people and put yourself out for them, it's what he would have done; when you pray faith prayers, it's Jesus talking to his Father on the Galilean hillside; when you relate to men and women without trying to manipulate them or possess them, it's the way Jesus befriended his diverse gang of followers.

### **Special gifts**

[4:13] Look – as I said, I'm planning to come over to see you. Then I can say all these things face to face instead of dictating them to a (very capable!) secretary. I might even, if you think it's appropriate, give a refresher course on Christian basics. But don't wait around for me to turn up; and anyway I can't be sure when that's going to be. You've simply got to get on with ministering the Word. Make sure they hear Scripture being regularly read in church assemblies, and I don't mean just trotted out as a ritual, but delivered with the force and passion of the original setting. See people on a one-to-one basis and let the Holy Spirit encourage and challenge them as you go through passages from the Psalms and the prophets together. Put on courses which take people further in their knowledge of the faith and aptitude for ministry.

[4:14] It wasn't just a formality, that service we held when we commissioned you for the work you were called to do. It was the Lord breathing into you the special gifts you were going to need, gifts of ability, eloquence, character and bearing. These weren't separate skills, though they do need to be individually reviewed and polished up – they are the Spirit himself in his amazing resourcefulness joining forces with you for your mission impossible. As the elders laid their hands on you in prayer, and as we heard a string of prophetic utterances relating to your life and work among the Ephesians, it was as though the Lord Jesus was saying, 'I hereby commit myself to seeing you through to the very completion of the job.' This isn't ancient history; it's as relevant now as it was then; you can't put all this battle equipment in the cupboard and forget about it!

**4:15-16** <sup>15</sup> *Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.*

<sup>16</sup> *Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

### **A real professional**

[4:15] Here's what to do. Break down what you have to do into manageable tasks, and deliberately apply yourself to tackling each one. Be a real professional at your job. Treat everything as grist to your mill. I promise you, people will sit up and take notice. They'll say (though they may not say it to your face), 'My, this young lad's come on a long way! He used to be someone you didn't think much of, but now you've got to reckon with him!' [4:16] Don't rush your devotional times with the Lord; be sure to pray for yourself just as much as you pray for others. And make proper space for preparation when it comes to talks and teaching sessions. It's all salvation work – and, as I never tire of saying, we're not in the business of getting people converted then leaving them to fend for themselves; we've got to see them through to the end of the race, not only them but ourselves as well. We may be gloriously saved, but we won't be gloriously safe till the Lord comes again, and meanwhile we're in it for the long haul.

**5:1-2** <sup>1</sup> *Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers,* <sup>2</sup> *older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.*

### **Various relationships**

[5:1-2] Well, this really is turning into a handbook of leadership! So what I need to do, before signing off, is to run through various categories of folk in the church and offer some practical advice about how you should relate to them and how you can cope with situations that tend to come up. I'll deal with the trickiest ones first.

You have an issue with an elder in your team – he's a man of maturer years and he's a tremendous asset to the church in all kinds of ways, but a serious difference of viewpoint has come up between you and you need to sort it out with him. Don't tear into him like a schoolmaster admonishing an unruly pupil! Treat him as if he were your own father, with the utmost respect and tactfulness. Discuss the matter frankly, and let him see where you're coming from, but always gently and courteously. Then you'll keep him on side rather than alienating him or making him even more inflexible.

Or there's a younger man who's causing you problems. Maybe there's a group of them who apparently couldn't give a toss for your so-called authority; you're not much older than them, if at all; and they don't see why they should fall into line. Now you've got brothers in your own family, and you know that relating to them isn't a matter of slapping them down like unruly puppies, it's understanding their point of view (however different from yours) and relaxing into their brand of humour without being priggish or 'offended'.

Or let's say there an older woman in your fellowship who is frankly a pest. Maybe there's a little circle who are always tittle-tattling and finding fault with the teaching or the music or whatever. Well, think of your own mother Eunice– you may have thought she was being unreasonable at times, but she loved the Lord and she was praying her heart out for you. She certainly taught you a thing or two about the Scriptures! Give people like that your due appreciation of them, both as people and for what they do for the church. I've got more to say about widows in a moment – but some women have (or have had) unbelieving husbands, and they may need special care and consideration.

I've left the hardest one till last: younger women. There will inevitably be some you relate to more easily than others, either because they have an outgoing personality or because they are physically attractive. You see them regularly in a church context, and you admire them and may even find yourself desiring them. Again, the family analogy may help here. How do you relate to your own sister? However well you know her, you wouldn't start dating her or making advances towards her (I hope). This is only a limited analogy, because while actual brothers and sisters may have heart-to-heart conversations, you should definitely avoid mentoring a younger person of the other sex. Remember how Aaron and his fellow-priests wore a headdress so that the words 'Holy to the Lord' were always in front of their eyes? You may love these folk dearly, but (even if the Lord brings you one of them as a gift for life) you must know where to draw the line – otherwise there's a disaster waiting to happen. The same would apply, of course, to any younger males you find yourself counselling.

If any of these situations is on your conscience, take it to the Lord who understands us better than we do ourselves.

**5:3-8** <sup>3</sup> Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. <sup>4</sup> But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God. <sup>5</sup> The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. <sup>6</sup> But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. <sup>7</sup> Give the people these instructions, so that no one may be open to blame. <sup>8</sup> Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

## Widows

[5:3] So let's think about those who find themselves widowed, that is, married women whose husbands have died, whether from natural causes or ill-health or (as is happening more frequently these days) through martyrdom. I'm not talking about those whose husbands have gone off and left them – life is difficult enough for them, I know, but as far as actual widows are concerned the church leadership has a definite duty to make sure that they aren't left out in the cold, that they retain their honoured place in the fellowship. That's why it's the custom to have an official Roll of Widows, which I'll come to in a moment. [5:4] Now it's important that the church doesn't cut across normal family obligations. If the widow has children or even adult grandchildren, it is incumbent on them to rearrange their lives, if need be, to provide for their mother/grandmother's basic needs and general wellbeing. This should form part of routine church teaching. It's not easy when an older relative suddenly becomes your responsibility, particularly if you are still grieving for your father/grandfather – so the next generation may need it spelled out to them that family loyalty trumps all other obligations, firstly on the human level because of the glad debt they owe to their parents for bringing them up and looking after them, and then on the Divine level because Jesus himself made provision for his own mother while hanging on the cross. [5:5] The Lord has a special bond with those who have been bereaved of their lifelong companion and breadwinner. They are now completely on their own (and doubtless feeling this loneliness acutely – which doesn't fade with time), while secular society tends to forget about them. They are cast upon God in a very real sense; they find themselves crying out to him from the depths of their agony, praying constantly during the day and regularly waking up in the small hours of the night, when their partner isn't next to them and the pain comes on afresh. [5:6] Can I say, incidentally, that taking a lover and 'getting a life' is not going to help in the longer term – it may assuage their pain temporarily, but like any fleshly indulgence it withers the soul and deadens a person's faith in Christ.

[5:7] I know it's not easy to stand up and say things like this, but if it safeguards the flock and keeps the flightier ones out of temptation, then you'll have done a good job. [5:8] But the point I was making about looking after your relatives in distress, particularly if they're living just round the corner, is an absolutely vital one. If you neglect this, how can you call yourself a disciple of Jesus? It's going to give your friends and neighbours a cast-iron excuse to have nothing to do with this heartless way of life. You're going to have a worse influence on people than if you were a strident atheist.

**5:9-16** <sup>9</sup> No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have



*broken their first pledge.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander.<sup>15</sup> Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan.<sup>16</sup> 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.*

### **Losing one's life-partner**

[5:9-10] Now, the Guild of Widows or whatever you call it in Ephesus. These people, as you know, play a vital part in the life of any church and should have the proper qualifications for membership. They must be at least sixty years of age and have a record of faithfulness to their former husband. You will need people to come forward and testify to the shining life of practical goodness they have led – the dedication they have shown in bringing up their children, the way they've opened their homes to all kinds of people, the little acts of kindness and compassion they have shown to their fellow-believers, the time and trouble they've taken over folk whose burdens are proving too much for them – anything which shows beyond doubt that their lives are modelled on the One who went about doing good and making life better for everyone he met.

[5:11] The reason I've put the age qualification so high (not to speak of the character requirements) is that if a woman is in her middle age or younger when she loses her spouse, and hasn't reached her menopause, she may find her sexual yearnings become too strong for her, so that she shacks up with an unsuitable partner. This puts all kinds of pressure on her family whose loyalty is still with their lost father. Even worse, the new boyfriend may not be a Christian at all, because all the available Christian males are either married or confirmed bachelors. [5:12] Sooner or later she may actually lose the love she had in the beginning for Christ Rev 2:4, and so incur the severe disapproval of her former fellow-believers – and how will she look her Saviour in the face when her time is done?

[5:13] Even if that doesn't happen, a younger widow who can't get a steady job may become habitually dependent on other members of the church, and spend her time visiting her friends (which is natural if her children are old enough to be at school or college, because sitting about all day at home isn't much fun) and wasting everyone's time in idle gossip, minding other people's business and being thoroughly indiscreet in spreading stories which may or may not be true but certainly aren't kind or helpful.

[5:14] I agree this is the worst case scenario, but one's got to face realities. I'm not against younger widows remarrying if they really can find a worthwhile partner, but as I said, they are the lucky ones – they can then go on to raise more children, show their worth as responsible householders, and prove themselves to be real kingdom warriors. This isn't a dry exercise in social theory, it's all part of the spiritual battle. The enemy would like nothing better than to get a handle on the church of Christ, by giving outsiders a chance to find some really juicy scandal to spread about these 'brothers and sisters in Christ' who get up to all kinds of questionable behaviour. And it can so easily start with a personable youngish widow, who's completely thrown off balance by losing her husband in mid-life, starts blaming God and ends up as an unbeliever. I have to say that that's a triumph for the forces of darkness – and I can quote cases where this has actually happened.

[5:16] Of course if the church took on the financial responsibility for all widows whatever, it would soon run out of resources. We need to spread the load by encouraging those of our Christian

sisters who have adequate means to take on the support of bereaved members of their own extended family. Then the church can concentrate on relieving those who are really destitute and have no-one else to whom they can turn.

**5:17-21** <sup>17</sup> *The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.* <sup>18</sup> *For Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages.'* <sup>19</sup> *Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.* <sup>20</sup> *But those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning.* <sup>21</sup> *I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favouritism.*

### **Officers of the church**

[5:17] We now come to the tricky question of whether officers of the church should receive financial remuneration or the equivalent in kind. It certainly shouldn't be automatic. Look at their track record. If they are acknowledged to be outstanding models of leadership and are looked up to with respect and affection, then nobody is going to object if they are given some kind of bursary. After all, the time they give to church affairs may eat into the hours of their regular daytime job. This particularly applies to those who bear the major burden of preaching and teaching. There is nothing worse than a speaker who stumbles through hurriedly scribbled notes because they simply can't afford to set time aside for this absolutely vital ministry. [5:18] There is a curious little statute in the Law which suddenly crops up in the middle of a completely unconnected passage, about not putting a muzzle over the nose of an ox which is going round and round in a grain mill trampling the husks off the ears of wheat. If the poor old thing occasionally licks up some of the grain, it thoroughly deserves its bonus. Now I suspect the great Author of scripture is not just talking about animals. Humans too respond to material encouragement. Our Lord himself endorsed the principle of gospel workers living by faith, implying that their day-to-day needs would at least partly be met by charitable giving. I have to say that this is completely different from someone refusing to do one's kingdom work properly unless one is paid a living wage for it – that kind of attitude is unspiritual and manipulative.

### **Serious accusations**

[5:19] Finally on elders: it may just happen that a serious accusation comes up concerning one of your tried and trusted team. First you should establish where it emanates from – anonymous communications should be treated with the contempt they deserve. If it comes from a single source, you should require that it be supported by at least one if not two other reliable people. [5:20] If after full investigation the subject of their complaint is found incontrovertibly guilty, there is nothing for it but to hold a general meeting and confront the accused person in the full light of day. Then everybody will know exactly where they stand, and no-one, especially the other elders, will have any illusions about your intention to deal with wrongdoing as severely as possible. I hope you never have to face such a situation; but if you do, for the Lord's sake don't sweep things under the carpet and pretend that nothing is wrong. [5:21] I say 'for the Lord's sake' deliberately, because it's all too easy for someone carrying the load of pastoring a church and facing the daily pressures that entails, to think that all the accountability stops with them. It doesn't. There's a heavenly board of governors in charge of every kingdom enterprise. I'm talking, of course, about our wonderful God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, and a few of the senior angels thrown in for good measure. There's a whole level of responsibility way above you, dear harassed leader, and it is completely senseless to ignore that. The Lord is your Managing Director, and he knows all the facts of the case. Do everything in full contact with him, and in plain view of the heavenly council.

You may have very strong personal reasons for not proceeding against this or that person, but you need to set them aside. The reason is simple: God has no favourites, and neither should you. It may be desperately difficult, but at least you have the ultimate consolation that you are answerable to the Judge of mankind, who is also the God of all grace.

**5:22-25** <sup>22</sup> *Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.* <sup>23</sup> *Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.* <sup>24</sup> *The sins of some are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them.* <sup>25</sup> *In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not obvious cannot remain hidden for ever.*

### **Suitability for eldership**

[5:22] That's why, incidentally, you shouldn't rush your fences when appointing someone to your team of elders. People may appear to be obvious candidates for the job (as David's elder brothers did to Samuel), but you should never shortcut those essential processes of investigation, consultation, and above all personal and corporate waiting upon the Lord, through which an individual's suitability or unsuitability becomes clear to all. It's not just you who are laying hands on them, it's the gathered representatives of the whole church. So to reinforce what I was just saying about confronting wrongdoers: it's all too tempting to paper things over in the hope that someone will turn out all right (especially when you've worked with them and developed a great affection for them), but it's never wise – it means effectively that you are colluding with them in their error, and you'll get tainted with their culpability. I don't mean you should adopt a 'holier than thou' attitude; I'm just insisting that your primary allegiance is not to your fellow-workers, but to the Boss himself, whose name is holy and who calls us to be totally consecrated to him.

[5:23] But beware of overdoing the asceticism! You tell me that you've been ill with various stomach ailments over the past few months, but you're still determined to maintain a rigorous regime, to remain teetotal and that kind of thing. I just wonder if you are damaging your own health needlessly. For instance, wine taken in very moderate quantities can have a beneficial medicinal effect. If you drink water the whole time, you run the risk of bugs entering your system, and this may be what's happening.

### **Moral failure in leaders**

[5:24] Let me wrap up this package of advice to a Christian leader with a general observation. Sin is insidious. Sometimes, of course, a person's moral failures are flagrant and spectacular, and there's no question of their guilt and every reason why they should be brought to the bar of human judgment. If not dealt with and sincerely repented of, their commissions or omissions will surely be waiting for them at that much more terrible Day of final accounting. But that's true also of things that never see the light of day as far as public exposure is concerned. People may get away with murder or worse during their time on earth, but it will catch up with them in the end. Everyone reaps what they sow – don't be under any illusion about that. [5:25] The great thing, though, is that the converse is also true: one person's shining lifestyle and wholesome influence may be obvious to everybody, while another person's good works may remain unpublicised and unacknowledged. In the final analysis everything is destined to come out into the open. I find that both absolutely terrifying, and infinitely reassuring.

**6:1-2a** <sup>1</sup> *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.* <sup>2</sup> *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 (or, and benefit from the service).*

### **Christian slaves**

[6:1] The church of Christ is unique for all kinds of reasons, but one of them is that there are no class distinctions within the fellowship. Slaves are accepted on exactly the same basis as free men and women. People can't get their heads round the fact that masters and their slaves might be calling each other brother and sister in Christ. This has implications, however, for when everybody gets back to work and 'normal' relations are resumed. It is terribly important that those who serve in a business or a household should continue to pay due respect to those in authority over them. If, for instance, you are a slave and your master isn't a Christian, you shouldn't go around telling him that he's a sinner and needs to repent. Sure, he is and he does, but leave it to his believing friends to bring it home to him. A great deal of harm can be done to the cause of the Lord if this principle is infringed in a possibly over-zealous desire to witness to everyone in sight. It could cause hostility to the gospel if basic social conventions are flouted. [6:2a] What then if your master is actually a Christian, whether or not you belong to the same house group? That doesn't mean you can treat him like dirt, nor that he is obliged to treat you more favourably than the other servants. What it does mean is that you work twice as hard for him, because you now see him as a fellow human being whom God loves and whom you too are called to love. Anything you do for him isn't just a matter of reluctant obedience, it's a way of actively supplying his needs and helping him in the exercise of his public or family responsibilities. Do you see how all our attitudes have to be revised once the kingdom of Christ invades our world?

**6:2b-5** *These are the things you are to teach and insist on.* <sup>3</sup> *If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching,* <sup>4</sup> *they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions* <sup>5</sup> *and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.*

### **Rival schools of teaching**

[6:2b] Well, I've covered a number of points which I hope give you some kind of structure for your training programme – as long as you combine it with practical encouragement and personal challenge. Occupy the central ground and don't yield to anyone. [6:3] Yes, you must expect disagreement and rival theories, because Ephesus is a ferment of philosophies and cults and (as I said at the start of this letter) there are plenty of strong-minded and able teachers both outside and within the church, not least Jewish rabbis who know their stuff really well. There's one simple test you can apply, which is: 'Does this teaching line up with the refreshing sanity of the Lord's own recorded words?' (Different versions of these are circulating, I know, and several of our team are starting work on a definitive collection.) Do this or that person's ideas square with the kingdom holiness taught by Jesus? [6:4] You can challenge them directly: 'Isn't this your own agenda rather than the good news of Christ? How much research have you really done into the apostolic records? All your disquisitions on disputed points and word derivations and so on – aren't they the product of people's fevered imaginations and desire to make a name for themselves, rather than the Holy Spirit's clear instructions to God's people?' Again, you can point to the disreputable behaviour generated by rival schools of teaching: there's no love lost between them, only eternal

bickering; they refer to each other by nasty names and attribute unworthy motives to their pet hates; [6:5] they are constantly at each other's throats, rubbing each other up the wrong way, and why? Because the fine minds that God gave them have been subverted by human assumptions; they have believed the devil's lies and completely lost their way as far as finding the truth is concerned. They couldn't care less about whether their flock is coming closer to God or leading more disciplined lives – all they can think about is how much cash they're making out of their sophistry.

**6:6-10** <sup>6</sup> *But godliness with contentment is great gain.* <sup>7</sup> *For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.* <sup>8</sup> *But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.* <sup>9</sup> *Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.* <sup>10</sup> *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

### **Affluent lifestyles**

[6:6] I realise all this may sound as if I'm secretly jealous of these people's affluent lifestyles. Not a bit of it! I'm thinking of heavenly treasure, so if I've got enough to live on while I do the Lord's work, I'm as happy as a king. If you've got that attitude, the Lord will never let you go short of what you need. [6:7] Look at it like this: when we arrived in this world, how much did we bring with us? And when we leave it, how much do we take with us? Absolutely nothing. [6:8] Well then, why don't we settle it with the Lord that as long as we can feed ourselves and our families, and have a roof over our heads and clothes to wear, nothing else matters.

[6:9] It's a terrible delusion, this assumption that life consists in the steady accumulation of wealth and possessions. You know those plants that attract insects by their heady scent and tasty juices, then swallow them down as they struggle desperately to escape? That's what money does to you. It's a fatal trap, because it sets up all kinds of longings and opportunities for self-indulgence, while the soul flutters helplessly in its grip and ultimately withers and perishes. [6:10] Money itself, of course, is a useful God-given instrument, and I'm certainly not saying it's a bad idea; but when it becomes the be-all and end-all of a person's life, up come all kinds of poisonous plants in what might have been fertile soil for the Word. I'm thinking, of course, of the Master's famous story about the farmer sowing his seed, and how the desire for the things of this world (including of course wealth) can choke someone's budding faith. It's just so sad when you see a promising young believer losing their compass bearings because they've replaced Christ as their journeying companion with the fickle goddess of gold. You meet them later on in life, successful maybe, but scarred front and back with wounds from their treacherous ally, and sick at heart because they've lost what was ultimately the most precious thing in their lives.

**6:11-12** <sup>11</sup> *But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.* <sup>12</sup> *Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*

### **God's man in Ephesus**

[6:11] Listen, Timothy. You're not just Timothy, you're God's man in Ephesus. Just as Moses was the Lord's direct representative for the children of Israel, just as Elijah and Elisha stood for the One True God in the corrupt society of their day, so you have been put there to shine for Christ in this present age. In the rat-race of daily life, in the midst of the scramble for riches, influence, pleasure, favour, you're after something very different. You're competing for an enduring set of values. A

goodness that isn't just conformity to what people expect, but which reflects Christ in all your dealings; a closeness to God that must know his will and pleasure in every situation; a steadiness that comes from remembering and believing the great promises of scripture; a compassion for others that has no whiff of self-serving; a toughness that perseveres in the face of circumstance and human perversity; a gentleness that refuses to trade insults or seek revenge, but instead manifests a humility learnt from the Master himself.

[6:12] Fight on until the day is done. It won't be pleasant much of the time, but you're contending in the best cause of all, which is bringing men and women to faith in the unseen God. Grip the life-rail that leads to eternity and never, ever let go. You've known God's call with a certainty that nothing can shatter. You've stood up in the presence of hundreds of witnesses and declared your allegiance to the One who went through everything for your sake. You can't turn back now.

**6:13-16** <sup>13</sup> *In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you* <sup>14</sup> *to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,* <sup>15</sup> *which God will bring about in his own time – God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,* <sup>16</sup> *who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honour and might for ever. Amen.*

### **Spotless record**

[6:13] This isn't just good advice from a more experienced fellow-worker. It's a trumpet blast straight from the throne. One day our wonderful God is going to reverse the processes of death and bring everything back to life again, just as he turned those dried and shrunken bones of Ezekiel's vision into a mighty, living army, by means of the Spirit and the Word. This programme has already started to operate and you and I are part of the advance team. Before us goes the Lord Jesus Christ, whose ministry was largely secret and unseen until he stood before the powers and authorities of his day, headed by Pontius Pilate the governor appointed by the Emperor to hold sway over all matters of life and death, and witnessed loud and clear to the fact that he was God's Messiah-King and he would return in clouds of glory to judge the earth.

[6:14] This same King has appointed you to his service in Ephesus, and you have got to remain faithful to that commission. As far as in you lies, you must aim for a one-hundred-per-cent spotless record in terms of the discharge of your duties and obligations. Because the Lord is coming back again, and part of that final scenario will be the rewards he gives to his ambassadors who have stood for him through thick and thin. [6:15] Don't start asking how soon this is going to happen, whether it is tomorrow or next week or not for thousands of years; it's for the totally Wise God to decide the moment of truth. Look up from your preoccupation with your daily concerns and remember who is in charge. It's the One in whose presence there is fullness of joy and at whose right hand there are pleasures that will never end. It's the Supreme Ruler of space, time and eternity, the Sovereign over all sovereigns and Authority way above all authorities.

### **Jesus is Lord**

[6:16] We mortal creatures arrive on the scene, play our brief part and vanish again. But he is the whole scene; time and space are nothing to him because he stands outside it all and holds it all together. He isn't just one among a number of competing gods, he is Life itself and the total Source of life. Meeting him would be like coming into contact with a permanent display of lightning; if you think you can simply walk up to him and have a man-to-man conversation, you're in for a huge shock. Even the archangels cannot look upon his glory – how much less mere flesh and blood like ourselves! Yet he has humbled himself to walk among us for a time on earth and call us his

friends. This isn't ordinary greatness; this is no self-appointed dictator compelling his subjects to throw themselves at his feet. Our God is someone we're going to want to worship and adore with every fibre of our being, feasting our souls on his beauty and wonder. Jesus is Lord – join me, join the hosts of heaven in praising him!

**6:17-19** <sup>17</sup> *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.* <sup>18</sup> *Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.* <sup>19</sup> *In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*

### **Language they can understand**

[6:17] This is why it's so shortsighted to set one's heart on the tangible treasures of earth, as if there were no world beyond the present one. You come across plenty of well-off people, no doubt, who in material terms are lords of all they survey – and they know it! They have lovely houses, glittering collections of jewels and rare stones, the latest designs on their marble floors, throngs of admiring clients and obedient servants. But they haven't found the secret of permanent satisfaction, and believe it or not, you are there to show them the way to it. If the Spirit gives you the opportunity to speak to them, don't waste it in platitudes or empty compliments. Tell them about the King who became a slave to set other slaves free. Show them how they are slaves to a system which sucks them dry and then spits them out. Ask them about the ultimate purpose of amassing riches, and whether they know about the eternal wealth that could be theirs. Introduce them to the Creator God who, far from being a kind of celestial spoilsport, actually wants his human creatures to enjoy his gifts to the full. [6:17] Then if they're still listening, show them what they've got to do to keep a sense of proportion in this crazy world. Show them how they can devote their considerable talents and resources to relieving need and righting wrongs. Teach them the ultimate currency conversion, where you trade in deeds of kindness down here on earth for heavenly gold bars. Train them in little ways to show appropriate generosity, not with ostentatious charity or reckless prodigality, but allocating funds where they will do the maximum of good, and putting their material possessions (including their spacious grounds and mansions) at the Master's disposal for growing his kingdom on earth. [6:19] If you're talking to financiers, use the language of economics to explain how to invest in the bank of heaven which never crashes or goes out of business. If you meet an architect, translate the basics of the faith into building terms and talk about laying the foundations of the eternal city. Or if you're chatting to a medical person, you can ask them if they've heard of the life-saving system which hooks a patient up to a never-failing source of health of soul. They might give you some strange looks, but you'll be talking in language they can understand, if they've half a mind to.

**6:20-21** <sup>20</sup> *Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge,* <sup>21</sup> *which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the faith. Grace be with you all.*

### **Precious commission**

[6:20] Dear, dear Timothy, don't despise the precious commission the Lord has given you. Don't let it fester like the short-sighted servant who was given his single talent and hid it in the ground. I know the scene over in Ephesus so well, all the disgusting excesses of temple prostitution, all the noisy celebrations of exotic cults, all the quicksilver dialectic of the sophistic course-leaders whose self-proclaimed 'wisdom' simply leads their disciples up blind alleys. You don't have to compete

with any of that. Just be on the alert for teachers in your own churches who think they've got to deploy the arguments and methods of human philosophy and psychology, instead of the life-saving gospel of Christ. I've known some brilliantly gifted intellects who have thought they were hitting the truth dead centre whereas they were missing it by miles; they have led others astray and ended up goodness knows where themselves. Such a waste!

Our single responsibility is to introduce people to a God whose generosity and forbearance are inexhaustible. The Jesus God. I'll leave you with him as I sign off now. I'm thinking of all of you. Give each other a hug from me.

## 1 TIMOTHY CROSS-REFERENCES

*Underlined* direct quotation from OT. \* probable allusion. References are listed in biblical order.

- 1:1-2** *First visit to Lystra* Acts 14:8ff, 16:1. *Stand on your feet* Acts 22:10. *Served the cause of the gospel* Phil 2:22.
- 1:3-7** *Salvation through faith* Rom 1:16-17. *Letter after letter* Eph 4:14, Col 2:4. *The one thing needful* Col 3:14. *Teach us in God's word* 2 Cor 3:14-18.
- 1:8-11** *Moral achievement* Rom 3:28. *Levi's table* Lk 5:31-32.
- 1:12-17** *Deny their faith* Acts 26:11. *Beaten up* Acts 22:19. *Wrists and ankles* Lk 23:34. *Was God's will* Acts 26:9. *Promised a Saviour* Gen 3:15. *Lost human race* Gen 22:18. *Most of my contemporaries* Acts 22:3. *As white as snow* Isa 1:18.
- 1:18-20** *A sword as well* Mt 10:34. *Church fellowships* Rev 2:2, 14-15. *Resurrection and judgment* 2 Tim 2:17-18. *Even more dangerous* 2 Tim 4:14. *Satan to blight their lives* \*Job 2:6. *Revealed word* Acts 5:1-11.
- 2:1-7** *Knowledge of Jesus Christ* 2 Cor 4:6. *Each person's native idiom* Acts 2:8. *From all quarters* Mt 8:11.
- 2:8** *What God wants in this world* \*Mal 1:11, 2 Pet 3:9. *Clean hands* Ps 66:18-20. *Time and place no barrier* 1 Th 5:17.
- 2:9-15** *Church patronesses* Rom 16:2, 3. *Priscilla and Aquila* Acts 18:26. *Wives like Sarah* Gen 17:12-15. *The Lord's household* Eph 2:19. *Hagar and Ishmael* Gen 16:1ff. *Creatures of the earth* Gen 1:28, 2:18ff. *Prior formation of Adam* \*Gen 2:7-8. *His wife's insistence* Gen 3:6, 18. *Greatly increased* Gen 3:16. *Come through it safely* Gen 4:1. *Gives birth to the Saviour* Gen 3:15. *Trust in the Lord* Prov 31:30, Lk 1:38. *Humbled by her love* Prov 31:10ff. *Self-discipline* 1 Pet 3:1-7. *Jezebel* 1 Ki 21:7, Rev 2:20. *Equality of status* Gen 1:27, Gal 3:28.
- 3:1-7** *Good shepherd* Ps 77:20, Ezek 34. *Jesus himself* Jn 10: 11. *Interviewing someone for eldership* Tit 1:5-9. *Personal profit* 1 Pet 5:2. *Fine Christian you are* Lk 18:11. *Devilish in origin* Ezek 28:2.
- 3:8-13** *Deacons, men and women* Rom 16:1, Pliny Letters 10:96. *Described himself as a deacon* Lk 22:26-27. *Serve one another* Mk 10:43-45.
- 3:14-16** *Modern psalms* Eph 5:14, 19, Phil 2:5-11, 2 Tim 2:11-13.
- 4:1-5** *Elsewhere in your province* Col 2:20-23. *Take over your relationship* 1 Cor 7:1. *Precious gift* Eph 5:25-35, Heb 13:4. *Human pride* Col 2:23. *Very good* Gen 1:31. *Such abundance* Ps 104:14-15. *Eternal joys* Ps 16:9-11. *Release from sin* Rom 8:21. *Covenant promises* Gen 8:22.
- 4:6-10** *Useful to the Master* 2 Tim 2:21. *Treasured and taught* 2 Tim 3:15. *Difficult situation* 2 Tim 3:10. *Standards of morality* Ezek 22:26.
- 4:11-14** *Standing in for Christ* 1 Jn 4:17b. *Coming over to see you* 1 Tim 3:14. *Completion of the job* 1 Th 5:24.
- 4:15-16** *In it for the long haul* 2 Pet 1:3-11.
- 5:1-2** *Mother Eunice* 2 Tim 1:5. *Holy to the Lord* Exod 28:36. *Better than we do ourselves* 1 Jn 3:20.
- 5:3-8** *Normal family obligations* Mk 7:9-13. *Hanging on the cross* Jn 19:25-27.
- 5:9-16** *Went about doing good* Acts 10:38.
- 5:17-21** *Statute in the Law* Dt 25:4, 1 Cor 9:9. *Gospel workers living by faith* Mt 10:10. *God has no favourites* Dt 10:17, Acts 10:34. *God of all grace* 1 Pet 5:10.



**5:22-25** *Did to Samuel* 1 Sam 16:6. *The whole church* Acts 13:3. *Just saying* 1 Tim 5:20. *Consecrated to him* 1 Pet 1:15-16. *Overdoing the asceticism* Col 2:23. *Illusions about that* Gal 6:7.

**6:1-2a** *Within the fellowship* Gal 3:28.

**6:2b-5** *Definitive collection* Lk 1:1-4, 2 Tim 4:11, 13. *Word derivations* 2 Tim 2:14. *Lost their way* Rom 1:18. *How much cash they're making* Phil 3:19.

**6:6-10** *What you need* 1 Ki 17:4, 9, 14, Phil 4:19. *Absolutely nothing* Job 1:21, Ps 49:16-17. *Famous story* Mk 4:19. *Sick at heart* Lk 18:23.

**6:11-12** *From the Master himself* Mt 11:29.

**6:13-16** *Bones* Ezek 37:14. *Judge the earth* Mk 14:61-62.

**6:17-19**

**6:20-21** *The Lord has given you* 2 Tim 1:6. *Short-sighted servant* Mt 25:24.

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