

Overview of 1 Timothy

Why study this book: 1 Timothy is like a handbook of how to run and serve in the church. Leadership and responsibility are common themes Paul mentions in order to provide training for a young elder/pastor in Ephesus. 1 Timothy has also been called a “pastoral epistle” along with 2 Timothy and Titus. Paul gives us very practical tips of what ministry looks like while also understanding the need for strong doctrine in protection from false teachers.

Author: Paul: the apostle and church planter. He addresses this personal letter to Timothy in verse 2 after mentioning himself in verse 1. “Paul’s greeting and the entire tone of the letter indicate Paul is the author.”¹

Date: Between AD 62-64. Paul wrote to Timothy shortly after Paul was released from Roman imprisonment.

Setting: Paul had spent three years in Ephesus, building up the church. However, he left Timothy there because the church was dealing with many problems: “false doctrine (1:3-7; 4:2-3, 6:3-5), disorder in worship (2:1-15), the need for qualified leaders (3:1-14), and materialism (6:6-19).”² Paul wrote this letter to Timothy for guidance in these issues.

Background: “Paul met Timothy in Lystra when Paul visited there (Acts 14:6; 16:1).”³ Timothy traveled with Paul, even though he was very young. Timothy had a reputation of godliness (Acts 16:2), which is why Paul chose him for his missionary journeys. At one point, both were in prison together in Rome. Paul used Timothy as his representative with many churches (1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10; Philippians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:2) and spoke very highly of him.

Main Point: To address the issue of disunity among the church. Everything from false teachers (1:3-11) to mature leaders (Ch. 3) was causing division in the church at Ephesus. “The letter exposed the false teaching Timothy was to oppose. It also provided a strong warning to the church to avoid trifling with such a doctrinal monstrosity. Paul urged Timothy to emphasize “sound doctrine” (1:10) in order to counter the vicious, pernicious doctrine of the heretics. As a longtime friend and companion of Paul, Timothy already knew this truth. It was Timothy’s responsibility to pass it on clearly to the gullible, defenseless believers in Ephesus.”⁴

¹ NLT Study Bible. Page 2168.

² MacArthur, 1&2 Timothy. Page 3.

³ NLT Study Bible. Page 2168.

⁴ New American Commentary, 1, 2 Timothy and Titus. “Occasion and Purpose.”

Outline:

- I. Greetings ([1:1-2](#))
- II. Warning against False Teachers ([1:3-11](#))
 - a. The Nature of the Heresy ([1:3-7](#))
 - b. The Purpose of the Law ([1:8-11](#))
- III. The Lord's Grace to Paul ([1:12-17](#))
- IV. The Purpose of Paul's Instructions to Timothy ([1:18-20](#))
- V. Instructions concerning Church Administration (chs. [2-3](#))
 - a. Public Worship ([ch. 2](#))
 - i. Prayer in public worship ([2:1-8](#))
 - ii. Women in public worship ([2:9-15](#))
 - b. Qualifications for Church Officers ([3:1-13](#))
 - i. Overseers ([3:1-7](#))
 - ii. Deacons ([3:8-13](#))
 - c. Purpose of These Instructions ([3:14-16](#))
- VI. Instructions concerning False Teaching ([ch. 4](#))
 - a. False Teaching Described ([4:1-5](#))
 - b. Methods of Dealing with It Explained ([4:6-16](#))
- VII. Instructions concerning Different Groups in the Church ([5:1;6:2](#))
 - a. The Older and Younger ([5:1-2](#))
 - b. Widows ([5:3-16](#))
 - c. Elders ([5:17-25](#))
 - d. Slaves ([6:1-2](#))
- VIII. Miscellaneous Matters ([6:3-19](#))
 - a. False Teachers ([6:3-5](#))
 - b. Love of Money ([6:6-10](#))
 - c. Charge to Timothy ([6:11-16](#))
 - d. The Rich ([6:17-19](#))
- IX. Concluding Appeal and Benediction ([6:20-21](#))

Sources:

1. New American Commentary: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus.
2. 1 Timothy & Titus – John Stott
3. 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon – Warren Wiersbe
4. The NLT Study Bible
5. The Quest Study Bible
6. 1 & 2 Timothy – John MacArthur
7. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/1-timothy/>