

The Most Excellent Way

*The Christian Solution to Chemical Dependency
"Becoming GOD-Dependent"*

"DISCIPLESHIP / LEADERSHIP"

BIBLE STUDY HOMEWORK

Studies in Colossians, 1 & 2 Timothy,
Titus and 2 Corinthians

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The Most Excellent Way

*Christian Alternatives to Chemical Dependency:
"Becoming GOD-Dependent"*

"Discipleship/Leadership"

BIBLE STUDY HOMEWORK

Contents

Study No. 1	..... "The Divine Flow of Life"	..... John 15:1-17
Study No. 2	..... "The Supremacy of Christ"	..... Colossians 1:15-23
Study No. 3	..... "Rules for Holy Living"	..... Colossians 3:1-17
Study No. 4	..... "The God of All Comfort"	..... 2 Corinthians 1:1-11
Study No. 5	..... "Teach Sound Doctrine"	..... 1 Timothy 1:1-11
Study No. 6	..... "Faith and a Clear Conscience"	..... 1 Timothy 1:12-20
Study No. 7	..... "Worship God Through Prayer"	..... 1 Timothy 2:1-8
Study No. 8	..... "Women As Leaders"	..... 1 Timothy 2:9-15
Study No. 9	..... "Overseers and Deacons"	..... 1 Timothy 3:1-16
Study No. 10	..... "Again, Teach Sound Doctrine"	..... 1 Timothy 4:1-16
Study No. 11	..... "Be Not A Respector of Persons"	..... 1 Timothy 5:1-6:2
Study No. 12	..... "Godliness with Contentment"	..... 1 Timothy 6:3-12
Study No. 13	..... "Guard the Truth"	..... 1 Timothy 6:13-21
Study No. 14	..... "Be Faithful"	..... 2 Timothy 1:1-18
Study No. 15	..... "Commitment"	..... 2 Timothy 2:1-13
Study No. 16	..... "A Workman Approved By God"	..... 2 Timothy 2:14-26
Study No. 17	..... "A Sense of Urgency for the Last Days"	..... 2 Timothy 3:1-9
Study No. 18	..... "Commitment to The Word"	..... 2 Timothy 3:10-4:8
Study No. 19	..... "Faithfulness to God's Calling"	..... 2 Timothy 4:9-22
Study No. 20	..... "Leadership Tasks"	..... Titus 1:1-16
Study No. 21	..... "What Must be Taught"	..... Titus 2:1-15
Study No. 22	..... "Doing What Is Good"	..... Titus 3:1-14

“The Divine Flow of Life”

HEART ATTITUDE: Devoted to God

The grapevine is a prolific plant. A single vine bears many grapes. In the Old Testament, grapes symbolize Israel’s fruitfulness in doing God’s work on the earth. In the New Testament, Jesus is the vine, and God is the husbandman (gardener, farmer). The branches are all who claim to be followers of Christ. The fruitful branches are true believers who, by their living union with Christ, produce much fruit. Those who turn back from following Christ after making a superficial commitment will be separated from the vine. Unproductive followers are as good as dead and will be cut off and cast aside.

JOHN 15:1-17 (NIV)

Jesus said: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine.

⁴Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

⁶If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

¹⁰If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

¹³Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command.

¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.

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• FOCUSING

1. What are the marks of a true friendship?

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2. What do you do to maintain your friendships?

• **STUDYING GOD’S WORD**

3. How are Jesus and the Father related? (15:1)

4. What is Jesus and who is the Father? (15:1)

5. How does the gardener tend to the branches that bear fruit and the branches that do not? (15:2)

Jesus makes a distinction between two kinds of pruning: (1) separating and (2) cutting back branches. Fruitful branches are cut back to promote growth. In other words, God must sometimes discipline us to strengthen our character and faith. But branches that don’t bear fruit are cut off at the trunk, because not only are they worthless, they often infect the rest of the tree. Those who won’t bear fruit for God or who try to block the efforts of God’s followers will be cut off from the divine flow of life.

6. What did Jesus say the branches must do in order to bear fruit? (15:4)

7. Who are the branches? (15:5)

Fruit is not limited to soul-winning. Jesus says that answered prayer, joy and love are fruit later (15:7, 11-12). (See “Jesus Teaches About Spiritual Fruit,” Sermon on the Mount Study No. 21.) Additional fruit, qualities of the Christian’s character, are described in Galatians 5:22-24 and I Peter 1:5-8.

8. What did Jesus say would happen to the branches that did not remain in Him? (15:6)

Remaining (abiding) in Christ means:

- Believing He is God’s Son: *“If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God” (1 John 4:15, NIV).*
- Receiving Him as Savior and Lord: *“Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—” (John 1:12, NIV).*
- Doing what God says: *“Those who obey His commands live in Him, and He in them. And this is how we know that He lives in us: We know it by the Spirit He gave us” (1 John 3:24, NIV).*
- Continuing in faith: *“See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father” (1 John 2:24, NIV).*
- Relating to the community of believers, Christ’s body (15:12).

9. What privilege was given to the branches that remained in the vine? (15:7)

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Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

10. What would be demonstrated by the disciples' bearing much fruit? (15:8)

When a vine bears much fruit, God is glorified, for daily He sends the sunshine and rain to make the crops grow, and He constantly nurtures each tiny plant and prepares it to blossom. What a moment of glory for the Lord of the harvest when the harvest is brought into the barns, safe and ready for use! He made it all happen! This farming analogy shows how God is glorified when people come into a right relationship with Him and begin to bear much fruit in their lives.

Many people try to do go, be honest, and do what is right. But Jesus says the only way to live a truly good life is to stay close to Him, like a branch attached to the Vine. Apart from Him our efforts are unfruitful. Are you receiving the nourishment and life offered by Christ, the Vine? If not, you are missing a special gift He has for you.

11. What did Jesus urge His disciples to do? (15:9)

12. How were Jesus' disciples to remain in His love? (15:10)

13. Why did Jesus talk with His disciples about vines and branches? (15:11)

When things are going well, we feel contented. When hardships come, we sink into depression. But real joy transcends these waves of circumstances. Joy comes from a consistent relationship with Jesus Christ. When our lives are intertwined with His, He will help us walk through adversity without sinking into debilitating lows and manage prosperity without moving into deceptive highs — without using substances to relieve the emotional pain or intensify the emotional highs. The joy of living with Jesus daily keeps us levelheaded no matter how high or low our circumstances.

14. What command did Jesus give His disciples? (15:12)

15. What is the greatest manifestation of love? (15:13)

We are to love one another as Jesus loved us, and He loved us enough to give His life for us. He may not have died for someone, but there are many other ways to practice sacrificial love: listening, helping, encouraging, giving . . . Think of someone in particular who needs this kind of love today. Give all the love you can, and then try to give a little more.

16. Who did Jesus say were His friends? (15:14)

17. Why did Jesus call His disciples' friends? (15:15)

Because Jesus is Lord and Master, He should call us slaves. Instead He calls us friends. How comforting and reassuring to be chosen as His friends. Because He is Lord and Master, our obedience should be unqualified and blind, but Jesus asks us to obey Him because we love Him.

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18. Why did Jesus choose His disciples? (15:16)

Jesus made the first choice: to love and to die for us, to offer us eternal life.
We make the next choice: to accept or reject His offer.
Without His choice, we have no choice.

19. What was Jesus' command? (15:17)

Christians will get plenty of hatred from the world; from each other we need love, acceptance and support. Jesus commands that we love our brothers and sisters. The saddest thing to her in Christianity is that Christians cannot be trusted. Are you trustworthy?

• **UNDERSTANDING**

20. How are we to remain in Jesus? Why?

21. What does it mean to bear fruit as a Christian?

22. How are we to bear fruit?

23. When is it difficult to develop and maintain a personal relationship with Jesus?

24. In what way has God been removing "dead" or useless parts from your character?

25. In what way is your joy complete?

26. When do you struggle with loving others the way Jesus has loved you?

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27. What kind of friend are you to Jesus? Explain:

28. Why is it hard to be Jesus' friend?

• **DOING THE WORD**

29. What steps will you take to develop a more intimate relationship with Jesus?

30. How will you be a better friend to Jesus beginning today?

31. How will you be a better friend to fellow Christians?

May the Lord richly bless you as you seek to enrich your relationship with Him!

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“The Supremacy of Christ”

HEART ATTITUDE: Poor of Spirit, Humility

LOOK UP THE SCRIPTURES:

Jesus is supreme over all creation, including the spirit world. We must believe that Jesus is God or our Christian faith is hollow and meaningless.

- Jesus is not only equal to God (Philippians 2:6), He is God (John 10:30, 38; 12:45; 14:1-11).
- He not only reflects God, but He reveals God to us (John 1:18; 14:9).
- He came from heaven, not from the earth’s dust (1 Corinthians 15:47), and is Lord of all (Romans 9:5, 10:11-13; Revelation 1:5, 17:14).
- He is completely holy (Hebrews 7:26-28; 1 Peter 1:19, 2:22; 1 John 3:5), and he has authority to judge the world (Romans 2:16; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1).

COLOSSIANS 1:15-23 (NIV)

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

¹⁶For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

¹⁷He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

¹⁹For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,

²⁰And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

²¹Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

²²But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—

²³If you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

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• **FOCUSING**

1. What person comes to mind when you think of greatness?

2. Whom do you look up to? Why?

3. What qualities stand out in a person you admire?

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- **STUDYING GOD’S WORD**

4. What is Christ’s relationship to God? (1:15)

Verse 15 is one of the strongest statements about the divine nature of Christ found anywhere in the Bible.

5. What is Christ's relationship to Creation? (1:15-17)

Because the false teachers believed the physical world was evil, they thought God Himself could not have created it. If Christ were God, they reasoned, He would be in charge only of the spiritual world. But Paul explains that both the spiritual and physical worlds were created by and are under the authority of Christ. He has no equal and no rival. Many of the world’s religions think the soul or spirit is important and the body is not, and Christianity has sometimes been influenced by these false beliefs. In truth, Christianity is very “physical.” We worship a God who created a physical world and pronounced it good. He promises us a new earth where real people have transformed physical lives — not a pink cloud where disembodied souls listen to harp music. At the heart of Christianity is the story of God Himself taking on flesh and blood and coming to live with us, offering both physical healing and spiritual restoration.

We humans, like Adam, are a combination of dust and spirit. Just as our spirits affect our bodies, so our physical bodies affect our spirits. We cannot commit sin with our bodies without damaging our souls, because our bodies and souls are inseparably joined. In the new earth, we will have resurrection bodies that are not corrupted by sin. Then we will enjoy the fullness of our salvation.

6. How do “all things hold together” under Christ? (1:16-17)

7. What is Christ’s relationship to the church? (1:18)

8. Why was the resurrection of Jesus significant? (1:18)

The resurrection (Christ is “firstborn from among the dead”) proves Christ's lordship over the material world. All who trust in Christ will also defeat death and rise again to live eternally with Him (1 Corinthians 15:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:14). Because of His death on the cross, Christ is exalted and elevated to the status that was rightfully His (see Philippians 2:5-11). Because He is spiritually supreme (preeminent) in the universe, we should surely give Him first place in all our thoughts and activities.

9. How did Paul explain the deity of Christ? (1:19)

The evidence is clear. Christ is fully divine. Christ has always been, and will always be, God.

10. What did God achieve through the work of His Son? (1:20)

Christ’s death provided a way for all people to come to God (“reconcile to Himself”). It removed the sin that keeps us from having a right relationship with our Creator. This does not mean that everyone has been saved, but that the way has been cleared for anyone who will trust Christ to be saved. We can have peace with God and be reconciled to Him by accepting Christ.

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Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

11. How did Christ bring us to God? (1:21-22)

NO ONE is good enough to save himself. If we want to live eternally with Christ, we must depend totally on God's grace. This is true whether we have been murderers or honest, hardworking citizens. We have ALL sinned repeatedly, and ANY sin is enough to cause us to come to Jesus Christ for salvation and eternal life. Apart from Christ, there is no way for our sin to be removed.

12. Why was reconciliation necessary? (1:21-22)

13. What is a Christian's position before God? (1:22)

14. What is the role of faith in reconciliation with God? (1:23)

The way to be blameless is to trust Jesus Christ to take our sin away. We must remain "established and firm" ("grounded and settled," KJV) in the Gospel, putting our confidence in Jesus alone to forgive our sins, to make us right with God, and to empower us to live the way He desires. When a judge declares a defendant "not guilty," he has been acquitted of all the charges. Legally, it is as if the person had never been accused. When God forgives our sins, our record is wiped clean. From His perspective, it is as though we had never sinned. God's solution is available to all of us regardless of our background or past behavior.

15. What kind of faith did the Colossians have? (1:23)

16. What was Paul's confident expectation? (1:23)

• **UNDERSTANDING**

17. Why did Paul take the time to describe the qualities of Christ?

18. What difference does our understanding about Christ make?

19. How would you explain reconciliation (with God) to a non-Christian friend?

20. What does the work of Christ on your behalf mean to you?

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Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

“Rules for Holy Living”

HEART ATTITUDE: Putting On New Life (Imitating Christ)

True Christians follow the rules. We put on the new nature by accepting Christ and we regard our old nature as dead. We change our moral and ethical behavior by letting Christ live within us, so that He can shape us into what we should be. Our strategy is described in Colossians:

- (1) Imitate Christ’s merciful, forgiving attitude (3:12-13);
- (2) Let love (charity) guide our life (3:14);
- (3) Let the peace of God rule in our heart (3:15);
- (4) Always be thankful (3:15);
- (5) Keep God’s Word in our hearts at all times (3:16); and
- (6) Live as Jesus Christ's representative (3:17).

COLOSSIANS 3:1-17 (NIV)

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

²*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

³*For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*

⁴*When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*

⁵*Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

⁶*Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.*

⁷*You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.*

⁸*But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.*

⁹*Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices*

¹⁰*And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

¹¹*Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

¹²*Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

¹³*Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

¹⁴*And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

¹⁵*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

¹⁶*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

¹⁷*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*

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• **FOCUSING**

1. What's the nicest suit or outfit you have ever worn?

2. When you're finished with your old clothes, what do you often do with them?

• **UNDERSTANDING**

3. Where did Paul tell the Colossians to turn their attention? (3:1)

4. Where did Paul tell the believers to focus their concern? (3:2)

5. What was the Colossians' security? (3:3)

For you died means we should have as little desire for this world as a dead person has. The Christians real home is where Christ lives. This gives us a different perspective on our lives here on earth. To *set your minds on things above* means to look at life from God's perspective and to seek what He desires. This is the antidote to materialism; we gain the proper perspective on material goods when we take God's view of them. The more we see the life around us as God sees it, the more we live in harmony with Him. We must not become too attached to what is only temporary.

6. Why should believers look forward to Christ's return? (3:4)

Christ gives power to help us live now, and He gives us hope for the future.

7. What must die? (3:5)

8. What evil activities does God seek to eliminate from our lives? (3:5)

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Put to death (mortify therefore your members, KJV) means we should consider ourselves dead and unresponsive to evil desires: sexual sin, impurity, lustful desires and materialism. We must make a conscious, daily decision to remove anything that supports these desires within us, and to rely on the Holy Spirit's power.

9. Why is God's wrath coming? (3:5-6)

10. What had the Colossians taken off? (3:7-9)

Rid yourself (verse 8) of these sins can also be translated, *lay aside the old self and put on the new*. This action is not so much mystical as it is practical and moral. Be done with your old morals and commit yourself to those Christ teaches. Paul is appealing to the commitment believers made in their baptism, and urges them to remain true to their confession of faith. We are to *put off* the old life and *put on* the new way of living given by Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit. If you have made such a commitment, are you remaining true to it?

11. What had the Colossians put on? (3:10)

We, as disciples, are in a continuing education program. The more we know of Christ and His work, the more we are being changed to be like Him. Because this process is lifelong, we must never stop learning and obeying. There is no justification for drifting along, but there is an incentive to find the rich treasures of growing in Him. It takes practice, review, patience and concentration to keep in line with His will.

12. What distractions are removed when one is "in Christ?"

Barriers of nationality, race, education, social standing, wealth, religion and power should not apply in Christianity. Christ breaks down all barriers and accepts all people who come to Him. Nothing should keep us from telling others about Christ, or accepting any and all believers into our fellowship any and all believers. We should be building bridges, not walls.

13. What virtues does God seek to plant in us? (3:12, 14)

(The key to forgiving others is remembering how much God has forgiven you. Is it difficult for you to forgive someone who has wronged you a little when God has forgiven you so much? Realizing God's infinite love and forgiveness can help you love and forgive others.)

14. How were the Colossian believers called to clothe themselves? (3:12-17)

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15. Why did Paul call on the believers to be peaceful and thankful? (3:15-16)

We should live in perfect harmony with one another. This does not eliminate all differences in opinion, but loving Christians will work together despite their differences. Such love is not a feeling, but a decision to meet others' needs. It leads to peace between individuals and among the members of the body of believers. Do problems in your relationship with other Christians cause open conflicts or mutual silence? Consider what you can do to heal those relationships with love.

The word "rule" comes from athletics: Paul tells us to let Christ's peace be the "umpire" in our hearts. Our hearts are the center of conflict because there our feelings and desires clash — our fears and hopes, our distrust and trust, our jealousy and love. How can we deal with these constant conflicts and live as God wants? We must decide between conflicting elements by using the rule of peace — which choice will promote peace in our souls and in our ministries?

16. What should we do? How? (3:17)

17. What is one principle that ought to guide everything we do? (3:17)

As a Christian, you represent Christ at all times—wherever you go, whatever you say. What impression do people have of Christ when they see or talk with you?

• **UNDERSTANDING**

18. If you consistently set your sights on Christ and heaven, how would your life be different?

19. What old, "earthly" clothing do you need to get rid of?

20. How does wearing "Christ's clothing" affect the way you live your daily life?

21. What Christian virtues are you lacking?

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22. What spiritual process is involved in “putting off” and “putting on?”

23. What is involved in replacing old habits with new ones?

24. How should life in Christ affect the way you treat others?

25. How are all your relationships to be built around Christ?

26. Why do we need to be loving toward others?

27. Why is a thankful spirit an important part of holy living?

• **DOING THE WORD**

28. Which of God’s goals for holy living will you apply to your life on a regular basis?

29. How can you be more thankful and loving to those who are close to you?

30. Use the remaining space to write a letter of worship, praise and thanksgiving to your Lord who has done so much for you because of His great love for you!

Continue on back ...

May God richly bless you as put off your old life and put on your new life in Christ!

“The God of All Comfort”

HEART ATTITUDE: Trusting God, No Matter What

God is faithful. His strength is sufficient for any trial; His provisions for our lives are divinely planned. When we experience trials and hardships, our prideful self-sufficiency is weakened and we learn, yet again, that we must depend upon Him. The by-product of trusting in and receiving God's comfort is the comfort we are able to give others.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-11 (NIV)

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
To the church of God in Corinth, together with all the saints throughout Achaia:*

²Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

*³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,*

*⁴Who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those
in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.*

*⁵For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives,
so also through Christ our comfort overflows.*

*⁶If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation;
if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you
patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer.*

*⁷And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you
share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.*

*⁸We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships
we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure,
far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life.*

*⁹Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened
that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.*

*¹⁰He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us.
On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,*

*¹¹As you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our
behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.*

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• **FOCUSING**

1. How do you normally react to hardship or suffering?

2. Do you sometimes blame God for your difficult circumstances? Why?

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• **STUDYING GOD’S WORD**

3. How did Paul describe God? (1:3)

4. Why do you think Paul began his letter by praising God? (1:3)

5. What does God do when we are troubled? (1:4)

6. How does God involve Himself in our troubles? (1:4-5)

To often we think that when God comforts us, our hardships should go away. If that were the case, we would only turn to God for relief of our physical or emotional pain — not out of love for Him. We must understand that “comfort” can also mean receiving His strength, encouragement and hope to deal with our hardships. The more we suffer, the more comfort God gives us.

When you are feeling overwhelmed, allow God to comfort you. Remember that each and every trial you endure will help you comfort other people suffering similar hardships.

The “sufferings of Christ” are those afflictions we experience for doing Christ’s ministry. Christ suffers with us when we are united in Him by faith.

7. What did Paul’s distress produce for the Corinthians? (1:6)

8. In what way is patient endurance produced in Christians? (1:6)

Paul explained that he and his companions suffered a great deal for bringing “comfort and salvation” to the Corinthians. But as God comforted Paul, He would comfort the Corinthian believers also. They endured with God’s strength.

9. Why did Paul tell the Corinthians about the hardships he had endured? (1:8)

10. Why did Paul despair? (1:8)

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Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

11. How did Paul's confidence in God enable him to rise above his despair? (1:8-10)

12. For what reason did Paul endure suffering? (1:9)

We often depend on our own skills and abilities when life seems easy, but when we feel unable to help ourselves, we turn to God. Being God-dependent is not defeat or weakness, but a realization of our own powerlessness without Him, and our need for His constant contact. God is our source of power and we receive His help by keeping in touch with Him. With this attitude, problems drive us to God rather than away from Him. We must trust God daily.

13. How did the Corinthians help Paul through his hardships? (1:11)

14. What was the gracious favor Paul anticipated? (1:11)

Paul requested prayer for himself and his companions as they worked to spread God's message of salvation. We must also pray for our pastor, teachers, and fellow laborers in the ministry. Satan will challenge anyone making a real difference for God.

• **UNDERSTANDING**

15. How does God want us to help one another in difficult circumstances?

16. Has a Christian ever brought you comfort from God during a difficult time in your life? Who?

17. Who do you know who is experiencing hardship?

18. How will you help others who are suffering?

19. Have you ever suffered for the Gospel? When?

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Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

20. How can you become more God-dependent instead of depending on yourself in times of hardship?

21. What can you do to learn patience and endurance from your trials?

• **DOING GOD’S WORD**

22. How will you help someone who is suffering to experience God’s comfort?

23. How will you remind yourself to pray for those in bondage to addictions and their families who are suffering hardship?

24. What will you do to show love and concern for a Christian brother or sister who is suffering?

25. Write a prayer to your Lord expressing how you feel toward Him, and the comfort He brings you.

May God richly bless you as you reach out to other with His comfort and Word!

“Teach Sound Doctrine”

ATTITUDE: Seeking God’s Truth in All Things

Paul instructed Timothy to preserve the Christian faith by teaching sound doctrine. He was to oppose, in love, false teachings that create divisions within the Church. We must know the truth in order to defend it. Our goals must be spiritually motivated, not temporally centered. We must speak the truth, and persuade others by our behavior — allowing God's Word to speak for itself.

Christians who argue for A.A., N.A., etc., expose their ignorance of the Bible. As Christian leaders, we must allow nothing to distract us from the main point of Scripture — the Good News of Jesus Christ.

1 TIMOTHY 1:1-11 (NIV)

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

²To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

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

⁴Nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work—which is by faith.

⁵The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

⁶Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk.

⁷They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

⁸We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.

⁹We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for law breakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers,

¹⁰For adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine

¹¹That conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

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• **FOCUSING**

1. Would you rather receive a letter or a phone call from a good friend? Why?

2. What are some laws that you benefit from directly?

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• **STUDYING GOD'S WORD**

3. How does Paul describe Jesus as he begins this letter to Timothy? (1:1)

The United States has become a nation of “victims” and “whiners,” where the government and humanistic philosophies offer false hope. For the Christian, living within the reality of the spiritual realm, our only hope is Jesus. Keep this in mind as you proceed through this study.

4. To whom was this letter written? (1:2)

Reread the Scriptures and imagine that Paul is writing to you: “To (your name), my true son (daughter) in the faith.”

5. Why did Paul want Timothy to stay in Ephesus? (1:3-4)

Ephesus was probably plagued by the same heresy that threatened the Colosse church, the false doctrine that to be acceptable to God one had to gain certain “hidden knowledge” and worship angels (Colossians 2:8,18). People in Ephesus constructed lists and genealogies with the hope it would aid their salvation. The false teachers were motivated by personal interests rather than Christ’s, and they engaged the Church in endless and irrelevant questions and arguments. Such worthless discussions sidetrack Christians from the life-changing message of Christ, taking precious time away from the study and sharing of the truth.

6. What did Paul say about myths and genealogies? (1:4)

7. What was the goal of the command Paul urged Timothy to enforce? (1:5)

False teachers are motivated by pride, power and fame. By contrast, genuine Christian teachers are motivated by love, truth and faith. It may be exciting to explore difficult doctrines in order to impress people with our great “knowledge,” but any position based on falsehood is ultimately empty, a cheap, temporary thrill. Teachers and leaders who truly follow Christ will find lasting, eternal rewards as they see His truth spread throughout the world and His love transform people everywhere.

8. In what way had some believers been misguided? (1:6)

9. How did Paul assess those who wanted to be teachers of the law? (1:7)

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Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

10. When is the Law good? (1:8)

11. For whom was the Law made? (1:9-11)

When teachers don't understand the purpose of God's Law, they can do nothing but present a list of do's and don'ts to their Christian hearers, robbing them of the joy that comes from salvation by faith. The Law was not meant to give us a list of commands for every occasion, but to show non-believers their sin and bring them to God. (See Romans 5:20-21, 13:9-10; Galatians 3:24-29.) God's Law becomes easier to follow when we walk in the Spirit, having the Holy Spirit's power to obey the Law out of a pure heart toward God.

In verse 10 "perverts" refers to homosexuals (see Romans 1:26-27). Some Christians have joined those who attempt to legitimize homosexuality as an acceptable "alternative lifestyle" all people have a right to choose. They too demonstrate their ignorance of Biblical truth (see Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:18-32; I Corinthians 6:9-11). Christian leaders must be careful to condemn the practice of homosexuality based upon the truth, not the people engaging in the behavior. Being aware of the discrimination we have experienced as addicts and alcoholics should cause us to not fear, ridicule or hate those who commit homosexual acts.

12. What did God entrust to Paul? (1:11)

If we call ourselves "Christian," we must provide a haven of forgiveness and healing for all repentant sinners — without compromising Biblical truths.

• **UNDERSTANDING**

13. When was the last time you wrote someone a letter of encouragement or received such a letter?

14. With whom do you have a relationship of mutual discipleship?

15. What false doctrines have you struggled with, if any?

16. What sort of doctrines promote controversy within The Most Excellent Way?

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Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

17. What goals motivate the Christian leaders whom you respect?

18. What goals motivate your service in The Most Excellent Way?

19. In what way should we use God's law today?

20. What impact does or should God's law have on your life?

21. How will you determine what is and isn't sound doctrine?

22. With what unique task has God entrusted you?

• **DOING THE WORD**

23. Who is someone to whom you will write a letter of encouragement, explaining the hope that is within you?

24. What steps will you take to make sure your motives are from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith?

25. Write a "thank you" letter to your Lord expressing how you feel about His Word.

Continue on back ...

May God richly bless you as you study His Word and adhere to sound doctrine: His Truth!

“Faith and a Clear Conscience”

HEART ATTITUDE: Submitting to God’s Grace and Mercy

Our conscience relates to our heart attitude toward God. How can we keep a clear conscience? We must treasure our faith in Christ and do what we know is right. Each time we deliberately ignore our conscience, we harden our heart. Soon our ability to tell right from wrong will disappear. That’s why so many Christians backslide. But as we walk with God, His Holy Spirit will speak to us through our conscience, showing us the difference between right and wrong. We must choose to respond to those inner tugs to do what is right — then our conscience will remain clear.

1 TIMOTHY 1:12-20 (NIV)

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that He considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.

¹³*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.*

¹⁴*The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*

¹⁵*Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.*

¹⁶*But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.*

¹⁷*Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

¹⁸*Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, ,*

¹⁹*Holding on to faith and a good conscience.*

Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.

²⁰*Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.*

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• FOCUSING

1. How has your life dramatically changed since you became straight and sober?

2. Do you know other addicts whose lives have been dramatically changed? Who? How?

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3. What sort of people try your patience the most?

• **STUDYING GOD’S WORD**

We often feel so guilt-ridden by our past that we believe God could never forgive and accept us. Consider Paul's past. He scoffed at Jesus’ teachings (“a blasphemer“), he hunted down and ordered God’s people to be murdered (“a persecuter, injurious”) before he believed in Jesus (Acts 9:1-9). Jesus forgave Paul and used him mightily for His Kingdom. He can also forgive and use you.

4. Why did Paul thank Jesus (1:12)? Do these reasons for thanksgiving apply to you also? Explain:

5. What did Paul say he once was? (1:13) How would you describe what you once were?

6. Why was Paul shown mercy? (1:13)

7. What was poured out on Paul? (1:14)

When we become Christians, we sometimes feel that our faith in Jesus and our love for Him and others is not enough. But we can be confident that Christ will help our faith and love grow as our relationship with Him deepens.

8. Why did Jesus come? (1:15) Have you accepted His offer?

9. How was Paul “the worst” (1:15)? How were you “the worst?”

Verse 15 is often memorized and quoted. In it, Paul summarizes the Good News: Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and no sinner is beyond His saving power. Jesus didn’t come just to show us how to live, or to challenge us to be better people. He came to offer us salvation that leads to eternal life.

10. Why was Paul again shown mercy? (1:16)

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Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

11. How does a person receive eternal life? (1:16)

12. What qualities did Paul ascribe to God? (1:17)

Paul's was so moved by God's love that his natural, emotional response to his reflections of the mercies of God caused Him to break into spontaneous praise. Have you ever felt this way?

13. Why did Paul give Timothy instructions? (1:18)

Paul valued the gift of prophecy (I Corinthians 14:10) through which the Holy Spirit brings warning and encouragement to the Church. Just as pastors are set apart for ministry today, Timothy was set apart for ministry when elders laid hands on him (I Timothy 4:14).

14. What did Paul say some have done with their faith? (1:19)

15. Why did Paul hand Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan? (1:20)

Hymenaeus' *blaspheme* (see II Timothy 2:17-18) was an error in teaching that weakened the believers' faith. When Paul delivered him *unto Satan*, Paul removed him from the fellowship of the Church so that he would see his error and repent. The ultimate purpose of Paul's action was not punishment, but correction. The Church should never be lax in disciplining Christians who deliberately sin. Deliberate disobedience should be dealt with quickly and sternly to prevent the Church from becoming infected. All discipline must be done in a way that strives to bring the offender back to Christ and into the love, acceptance and forgiveness of the Church.

The definition of discipline includes these words: strengthening, purifying, training, correcting, perfecting. Therefore, condemnation, suspicion, withholding forgiveness, or permanent exile are not to be a part of Church discipline.

• **UNDERSTANDING**

16. To what service has God appointed you?

17. How and when has God shown you mercy? Explain:

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Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

18. In what way has God used you as an example so that others might believe?

19. How do God's attributes of being eternal, immortal, and invisible encourage you?

20. In what way is God the King of your life?

21. What does it mean to fight the good fight?

22. What do you fight in your life as a Christian?

23. How and why do people shipwreck their faith?

24. What distractions draw Christians away from their proper course?

• **DOING THE WORD**

25. What steps will you take today to ensure that your faith is on the proper course and not in danger of being shipwrecked?

26. What events or experiences in your life will you use to encourage others to believe?

“Worship God Through Prayer”

HEART ATTITUDE: Seek God in Faith and Holiness

Even though God is all-powerful and all-knowing, He has chosen to let us help Him change the world through our prayers. How prayer works is a mystery to us because of our limited (finite) understanding, but it is a reality. Paul urges us to pray for each other and for our leaders in government. It is difficult to pray when we have sinned or when we feel angry and resentful. And it is not pleasing to God. *“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective ” (James 5:16).*

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-8 (NIV)

¹I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— (1)

²For kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. (2)

³This is good, and pleases God our Savior, (3)

⁴Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. (4)

⁵For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (5)

⁶Who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time. (6)

⁷And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—

I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles. (7)

⁸I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. (8)

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• FOCUSING

1. What are some of today’s controversial issues that could be topics of prayer?

2. How can prayer be “worship”?

3. Whom or what do you have difficulty praying for? Why?

• STUDYING GOD’S WORD

4. What did Paul urge first of all? (2:1-2)

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Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

5. What did Paul hope would be the result of the Church's prayers? (2:2)

6. What pleases God? (2:2-3)

7. What does God want? (2:4)

Paul and Peter (see II Peter 3:9) said God longs for all to be saved. This does not mean that all will be saved, because the Bible makes it clear that many reject Him (Matthew 25:31-36; John 12:44-50; Hebrews 10:26-29).

The Gospel has a universal scope; it is not limited to people of one race, one sex, or on national background. God loves the whole world and sent His Son to save sinners.

8. For whom is Jesus Christ a mediator? (2:5)

9. For whom did Jesus give Himself? Why? (2:6)

We humans beings are separated from God by sin, and only one person in the universe is our mediator and can stand between us and bring us together again — Jesus, who is both God and man. Jesus' sacrifice brought new life to mankind. Have you chosen to let Him bring you to the Father?

10. Why did Paul insist he was not lying? (2:7)

Paul says he is an apostle (see I Corinthians 15:7-11).

11. What did Paul want people everywhere to do? (2:8)

• **UNDERSTANDING**

12. For what authorities or leaders should you pray?

13. What sort of prayers should you make on behalf of your leaders?

14. If God wants all people to be saved, why then aren't all people saved?

15. When have you ever served as a mediator between two people?

“Women as Leaders”

HEART ATTITUDE: Acceptance of God’s Anointed, Including Women

Jesus raised women from degradation and servitude to fellowship and service. In the Jewish culture, women were not allowed to learn from rabbis. By including women in the company of followers who traveled with Him, and in whose homes He visited, to whom He appeared after His death, Jesus showed that all people are equal under God.

The Most Excellent Way welcomes women as meeting leaders so long as their motives are not to “lord it over” the men. God’s qualifications for leaders and teachers is a “servant’s heart” — the qualification required for both genders. Men and women submitted to the Lordship of Christ should and would not exhibit an attitude of superiority.

1 TIMOTHY 2:9-15 (NIV)

*I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety,
not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes,*

¹⁰*But with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.*

¹¹*A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.*

¹²*I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.*

¹³*For Adam was formed first, then Eve.*

¹⁴*And Adam was not the one deceived;
it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.*

¹⁵*But women will be saved through childbearing—
if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.*

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• **FOCUSING**

1. What are some examples of women seeking their personal rights?

2. What are some of the ways women influence the world for good? For bad?

3. What examples show that people in our society are obsessed with their physical appearance?

• **STUDYING GOD'S WORD**

To understand these verses, we must understand the situation in which Paul and Timothy worked. In first-

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Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

century Jewish culture, women were not allowed to study. When Paul said women should “learn” quietly and humbly, he was offering an amazing new opportunity. Even today, some young women are bound to old traditions, and may only study selected Scriptures which relate directly to their part in celebrating Jewish feasts and holy days.

Paul did not want women to teach because they didn't yet have enough knowledge or experience. The Ephesus church had a serious problem with false teachers. Evidently the women were especially susceptible to their teaching (see 2 Timothy 3:1-9), because they did not yet have enough Biblical knowledge to see through the false claims.

In addition, some of the women were apparently flaunting their new-found Christian freedom by wearing inappropriate clothing.

Paul was telling Timothy not to put anyone (in this case, women) into positions of leadership who were not yet mature in the faith (see 5:22). The same principle applies to the Church today (see 2 Timothy 3:6).

4. How should women dress? (2:9-10)
-

Some Christian women were apparently trying to gain respect by looking beautiful rather than becoming Christ-like in character. It is not unscriptural for a woman to want to be attractive. Beauty, however, begins inside a person. A gentle, modest, loving character gives a light to the face that cannot be duplicated by the best cosmetics and jewelry in the world. A carefully groomed and well-decorated exterior is artificial and cold unless inner beauty is present.

5. What instructions did Paul give women? (2:9-12)
-

6. How did Paul instruct women to learn? (2:11)
-

7. What didn't Paul permit women to do? (2:11)
-

Verse 12 is interpreted by some to mean that women should never teach in the assembled church. However, other commentators say that Paul's words “I do not permit” (“I suffer not,” KJV) can be more literally translated “I am not allowing.” Paul did not forbid women from ever teaching men.

Paul's co-worker, Priscilla, taught Apollos, the great preacher (Acts 18:24-26). Paul frequently mentioned other women who held positions of responsibility in the church. Phoebe worked in the church (Romans 16:1). Mary, Tryphena, and Tryphosa were the Lord's workers (Romans 16:6, 12); so were Euodias and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2).

As to women being silent in church meetings, the word silence here is often translated “be in quietness,” expressing an attitude of composure. (A different Greek word is usually used to mean “complete silence.”)

In addition, Paul acknowledges that women publicly prayed and prophesied (I Corinthians 11:5). Apparently, however, some women of the early churches were abusing their newly acquired Christian freedom. Because these women were new converts, they did not yet have the necessary experience, biblical knowledge or maturity to teach.

8. What explanation did Paul give for not allowing women to teach or have authority over men? (2:12-14)
-

Paul wrote about male/female roles in marriage (see Ephesians 5:21-33 and Colossians 3:18-19). Here he talks about male/female roles within the Church. Some scholars see these verses about Adam and Eve as an illustration of what was happening in the Ephesian church. Just as Eve had been deceived in the Garden of

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Eden., so the Ephesian women were being deceived by false teachers. And just as Adam was the first human created by God, so the men in the Ephesian church should be the first to speak and teach, because they had more learning. This view, then, stresses that Paul's teaching here is not universal, but applies to churches with similar problems. Other scholars, however, contend that the roles Paul points out are God's design for His created order. He established these roles to maintain harmony in both the family and the church.

Paul was not excusing Adam for his part in the Fall (Genesis 3:6-7, 17-19). On the contrary, Paul placed primary blame for mankind's sinful nature on Adam (Romans 5:12-21).

9. In what way did Paul say that women would be saved? (2:15)

There are several interpretations of verse 15:

- a. Man sinned and so men were condemned to hard labor. Woman sinned and so women were condemned to pain in childbearing. Both men and women, however, can be saved through trusting Christ and obeying Him.
- b. Women who fulfill their God-given roles are demonstrating true commitment and obedience to Christ. One of the most important roles for a wife and mother is to care for her family.
- c. The childbirth mentioned refers to the birth of Jesus Christ. Women (and men) are saved spiritually because of the most important birth, that of Christ Himself.
- d. From the lessons learned through the trials of childbirth and all that includes (the marriage relationship, parenting, caretaking, etc.) women can develop qualities that teach them about love, trust, submission and, finally, service.

• **UNDERSTANDING**

10. What does it mean to dress modestly?

11. How does your church understand and apply Paul's restrictions on women?

12. How are women incorporated into the leadership of The Most Excellent Way ministry at your church?

13. Women only: What opportunities for service are you interested in pursuing?

14. Women only: Are you comfortable with Paul's restrictions on women? Why or why not?

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• **DOING THE WORD**

15. How can you focus your attention on Christian service and worship of God over outward appearance?

16. Who are the women leaders in your church that you admire? Why?

17. Women only: How do you feel about your role as a women? Explain.

18. Men only: How can you show support for the women in your life?

May God richly bless you as you study His Word!

“Overseers and Deacons”

HEART ATTITUDE: Count the Cost of Leadership

It is good to want to be a spiritual leader, but the standards are high. Paul enumerates some of the qualifications here. Do you hold a position of spiritual leadership, or would you like to be a leader some day? Check yourself against Paul's standard of excellence. Those with great responsibility must meet high expectations.

The lists of qualifications for leadership indicate a blameless and pure life requiring effort and self-discipline. All believers, even if we never plan to be leaders, should strive to follow these guidelines because they are consistent with what God says is true and right. The strength to do them comes from Jesus.

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-16 (NIV)

Here is a trustworthy saying:

If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.

²Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

³Not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

⁴He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.

⁵(If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)

⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.

⁷He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

⁸Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.

⁹They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.

¹⁰They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

¹¹In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

¹²A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.

¹³Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

¹⁴Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that,

¹⁵If 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.

¹⁶Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, 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.

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• **FOCUSING**

1. What are some of the qualifications you had to meet for your job?

2. What important qualities should managers possess?

• **STUDYING GOD'S WORD**

3. What did Paul say about the person who wants to be an overseer? (3:1)

“Overseer” can be translated bishop, church leader, or presiding elder. The leader of a ministry should meet the same standards of service.

4. What qualities must an overseer possess? (3:2-7)

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

(5) _____

(6) _____

(7) _____

(8) _____

(9) _____

(10) _____

(11) _____

(12) _____

(13) _____

(14) _____

(15) _____

In verse 2, Paul is prohibiting both polygamy and promiscuity. This does not prohibit an unmarried man or women from becoming a ministry leader, or a widowed leader from remarrying. Many come to Christ and Christian service having been divorced (chemical dependency breeds divorce), and if God accepts them into His Kingdom, The Most Excellent Way should also. However, a divorce of a Christian couple should eliminate the possibility of leadership in The Most Excellent Way where “forgiveness” is stressed unequivocally for all relationship problems. Jesus’ one exception in Matthew 5:32. However, even the justification of adultery is not beyond reconciliation between two people committed to the Lordship of Jesus.

If anyone desiring to serve is disqualified by Paul’s list, he or she must examine their heart motives for desiring to be in leadership. God doesn't call everyone to leadership, but He does call everyone to love (*agapeo*) and to serve.

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5. Why is good family management a qualification for being an overseer? (3:4-5)

Spiritual leadership must begin at home. Leaders of The Most Excellent Way sometimes have more empathy and understanding for addicts and alcoholics, and mistakenly think their ministry work justifies neglecting family restoration and growth. If a man (or woman) is not willing to care for, discipline, and teach his/her children, he/she is not qualified to lead any ministry within the Church.

6. Why shouldn't the overseer be a new convert? (3:6)

The first priority for new believers is to develop their relationship with God, the Father, through faith in Jesus Christ. Growing in our personal spiritual walk is the most important part of our new life, and it must be guided by the Holy Spirit. Too often ministries are desperate for workers and place unqualified new believers in positions of leadership. New faith needs to pass the test of time in order to mature. New believers, however, should be allowed to serve (minister) in a supervised ministry, especially one the Lord has used to bless them (see I Corinthians 1:3-4).

Also, new converts typically spend much time on their "recovery" and new life, while ignoring the needs of their spouse and children. The most significant evidence of a person's readiness for leadership is the successful, rewarding discipleship experience and leadership within the family.

7. Why must an overseer have a good reputation? (3:7)

8. What qualities must a deacon possess? (3:8-10, 12)

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____
- (4) _____
- (5) _____
- (6) _____
- (7) _____
- (8) _____

9. What is required before someone can serve as a deacon? (3:10)

"Deacon" means "one who serves," a position the apostles began in Jerusalem's early church (see Acts 6:1-6) to care for the physical needs of believers. In some churches today, new and young Christians are often asked to serve as deacons. Paul said men are to be tested with lesser responsibilities before being made deacons.

10. What sort of person must the wife of a deacon be? (3:11)

Some translate "wives" as "women helpers" or "deaconesses," and it is unclear whether this verse refers to wives of deacons or female church leaders (i.e., the deaconess, Phoebe, Romans 16:1). In either case, Paul says the behavior of prominent women in the Church should be just as responsible and blameless as that of prominent men.

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Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

11. What do those who serve well gain? (3:13)

12. What benefit is there in serving well? (3:13)

13. Why did Paul write these instructions? (3:14-15)

To be a leader is a heavy responsibility because the Church belongs to the living God. Paul's lists of qualifications for leadership show that living a blameless and pure life requires effort and self-discipline. All Christians, even if they do not plan to be leaders, should strive to follow these guidelines because they are consistent with what God says is true and right. Take heart. The strength to do so comes from Christ.

14. What is said about Jesus in the hymn Paul quoted? (3:16)

• **UNDERSTANDING**

15. What position do you desire/hold in your church or The Most Excellent Way?

16. To what noble tasks have you aspired?

17. Which of the character qualities needed by both overseers and deacons do you think is the most important for a ministry or church leader to possess?

18. If you applied the lists of qualifications for these positions to yourself, how would you measure up?

19. What is the common ingredient in the lists of qualifications for leaders in the church?

• **DOING THE WORD**

20. What qualities from the above lists do you want to improve in your life? How will you begin?

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21. In what way will you serve in your church?

May God richly bless you as you study His Word!

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“Again, Teach Sound Doctrine”

HEART ATTITUDE: Perseverance; Commitment to Sound Doctrine

It is not enough that a teacher appears to know what he is talking about, is disciplined and moral, and says he is speaking for God. If his words contradict the Bible, his teaching is false. Paul warned Timothy not only of this specific problem, but of any teaching that caused believers to dilute or reject parts of their faith. False teaching can be very direct or extremely subtle. Paul warned about “deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.” Satan deceives people by offering a clever imitation of the real thing — the truth of God. We must look beyond a teacher’s methods and protestations of faith in Jesus to his teaching concerning Jesus Christ. A teacher’s attitude toward Jesus shows the source of his message.

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-16 (NIV)

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

²Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

³They 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.

⁴For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,

⁵because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

⁶If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.

⁷Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.

⁸For 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.

⁹This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance

¹⁰(and for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.

¹¹Command and teach these things.

¹²Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

¹³Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

¹⁴Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

¹⁵Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.

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

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The Most Excellent Way
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• **FOCUSING**

1. How do you discern the difference between sound doctrine and false teaching?

2. What are some of the godless myths you hear in The Most Excellent Way meetings?

• **STUDYING GOD'S WORD**

3. What did the Spirit say some would do in the later time? (4:1)

The "later times" began with Christ's resurrection and will continued until His return, when He will set up His Kingdom and judge all mankind.

4. What did Paul say about the consciences of hypocritical liars? (4:2)

5. What did the liars whom Paul attached forbid people to do? (4:3)

6. What is true about all that God created? (4:4)

7. Why should anything received with thanksgiving not be rejected? (4:4-5)

Everything that God made is good. We should ask His blessing on His created gifts that give us pleasure and thank Him for them. this does not mean we should abuse what God has made — for example, gluttony abuses God's gift of good food, lust abuses God's gift of love, and murder abuses God's gift of life. Instead of abusing, we should enjoy these gifts by using them to serve and honor God.

The false teachers gave stringent rules (such as forbidding people to marry or to eat meat), making themselves appear self-disciplined and righteous. Their strict disciplines for the body, however, could not and do not remove sin.

8. Under what circumstances would Timothy be a good minister? (4:6)

9. What did Paul instruct Timothy to do? (4:7)

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10. How did Paul contrast physical training with godliness? (4:8)

11. What saying is trustworthy? (4:9-10)

Are you in shape physically and spiritually? Physical fitness is emphasized in our society, but Paul declared that spiritual health is even more important. We must develop our faith by using the abilities God has given us to serve Him and one another.

12. What should young people strive for? (4:12)

13. What kind of example did Paul want timothy to set? (4:12)

14. To what was Timothy to devote himself? (4:13)

Timothy was a young pastor. It would be easy for older Christians to look down on him because of his youth. He had to earn the respect of his elders by setting an example in his teaching, living, love, faith and purity. Regardless of your age, God can use you. Whether young or old, don't think of your age as a handicap. Live so others can see Christ in you.

15. What was Timothy not to neglect? (4:14)

Timothy's "gift" (verse 14) was confirmed by prophecy and by the laying on of hands by church elders. He was not a self-appointed leader. If you aspire to leadership, seek the counsel of mature Christians who know you well and who will hold you accountable.

16. What did Paul want others to see? (4:15)

Our progress in our walk with God is important for others to see, especially if we are called to leadership. Skilled and talented athletes lose their prowess if their muscles aren't toned by constant use, and we lose our spiritual gifts if we don't put them to work. Our talents are improved by exercise, and failure to use them causes them to waste away from lack of practice and nourishment. What gifts and abilities has God given you?

17. What could Timothy do to save himself and his hearers? (4:16)

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• **UNDERSTANDING**

18. For what reasons do people today abandon their faith?

19. From what good things have people persuaded you to abstain?

20. How can you be a good minister of Jesus Christ?

21. What does your use of time show about how much you value training for godliness?

22. In what ways will you be an example to other believers?

23. What importance does your church assign to the public reading of Scripture?

24. What gift has God given you that you should not neglect?

25. How will watching your life and doctrine save you?

• **GETTING PERSONAL**

26. What specific actions will you schedule into your daily routine to learn sound doctrine?

27. What false doctrines will you discard in favor of sound doctrine?

28. How will the Lord help you help others to mature in godly speech, godly lifestyle, godly love, godly faith and godly purity?

May the Lord richly bless you as you study His Word!

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“Be Not a Respector of Persons”

HEART ATTITUDE: Love and Acceptance of All Christians

1 TIMOTHY 5:1–6:2 (NIV)

^{5:1}*Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father.*

Treat younger men as brothers,

²*older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.*

³*Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need.*

⁴*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.*

⁵*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.*

⁶*But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.*

⁷*Give the people these instructions, too, so that no one may be open to blame.*

⁸*If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

⁹*No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband,*

¹⁰*and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints,*

helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.

¹¹*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.

¹²*Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge.*

¹³*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 gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to.

¹⁴*So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children,*

to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander.

¹⁵*Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan.*

¹⁶*If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.*

¹⁷*The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.*

¹⁸*For the Scripture says, “Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.”*

¹⁹*Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.*

²⁰*Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.*

²¹*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 favoritism.*

²²*Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.*

²³*Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.*

²⁴*The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them.*

²⁵*In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden.*

^{6:1}*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.*

^{6:2}*Those who have believing masters are not to show less respect for them because they are brothers. Instead, they are to serve them even better, because those who benefit from their service are believers, and dear to them. These are the things you are to teach and urge on them.*

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• **FOCUSING**

1. What groups of people are treated with special favor in our society today?

2. Whose responsibility is it to care for the needy?

3. How much money do you think a pastor should make? Why?

4. What adjectives would you use to describe our society's morality?

• **STUDYING GOD'S WORD**

5. How should believers treat older men, younger men, older women, and younger women? (5:1-2)

5:2 – All believers are members of god's family. Men in the ministry can avoid improper attitudes toward women by treating them as family members, not as possessions or objects. If men see women as fellow members in God's family, they will protect them and help them grow spiritually.

6. To whom did Paul tell Timothy to give proper recognition? (5:3)

7. What should the children and grandchildren of a widow do? (5:4)

8. What does the widow who is really in need and left alone do? (5:5)

The church should support those who have no families, and it should also help the others – whether elderly, young, handicapped, ill or poverty stricken – with their emotional and spiritual needs. Those who are helped often turn around and help others so the church becomes a circle of caring.

9. What is true about the widow who lives for pleasure? (5:6)

10. Why did Paul tell Timothy to give these instructions? (5:7)

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11. Why is it important to provide for your family? (5:8)

Family relationships are important to God. Paul says that a person who neglects his family responsibilities should not call himself a Christian. These responsibilities include emotional support, spiritual support, as well as financial support. Are you doing your part to meet the needs of those included in your family circle?

12. Of what is the elder who directs the affairs of the church worthy? (5:17)

13. Why should elders be paid? (5:18)

Preaching is proclaiming the Word of God and confronting listeners with the truth of Scripture. Teaching is explaining the truth in Scripture, helping learners understand difficult passages, and helping them apply God's Word to daily life. *Elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor. Often we take these servants for granted. How can you honor your preachers and teachers? How would you desire to be honored?*

There are several ways to support the efforts of those who serve God in His church. First, we can be certain they have an adequate salary. Second, we can support them emotionally by expressing appreciation for what they do. third, lift their spirits with encouraging surprises from time to time. Our ministers deserve to know we are giving to them cheerfully and generously.

14. How should accusations against an elder be handled? (5:19)

15. Why should those who sin be rebuked publicly? (5:20)

16. How did Paul encourage Timothy to keep these instructions? (5:21)

Church leaders are not exempt from sin, faults and mistakes. But they are often criticized for the wrong reasons – minor imperfections, failure to meet our *expectations*, personality clashes. Therefore Paul said that complains should not even be heard unless confirmed by two or three witnesses. Sometimes leaders should be confronted about their behavior, and sometimes they should be rebuked. But all rebuking must be done fairly, lovingly, and for the purpose of restoration.

17. What did Paul encourage Timothy to do and not do? (5:22)

Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands means not to appoint leaders quickly. Church leaders must never be in a hurry to choose its leaders because major problems or sins may be overlooked. Choosing ministry leaders is a serious responsibility. Candidates must have strong faith and live up-right lives, with the qualities listed in 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9. Not everyone who wants to be a leader is eligible – we must be certain of an candidate's qualifications.

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18. Why did Paul encourage Timothy to use a little wine? (5:23)

It's unclear why Paul gave this advice to Timothy. It may be that he was practicing strict self-denial and Paul was telling him to loosen up a bit. Maybe contaminated water had led to Timothy's indigestion and so he should not drink only water. Whatever the reason for Paul's advice, it is not an invitation for abusing alcohol.

19. What is the impact of a person's sins and good deeds? (5:24-25)

20. Why should slaves consider their masters worthy of respect? (6:1)

21. How should slaves treat masters who are believers? (6:2)

In Paul's culture there was a great social and legal gulf separating masters and slaves. but as Christians, masters and slaves became spiritual equals (see Galatians 3:28). Paul did not speak against the evils of slavery. His counsel on the master/slave relationship applies to employer/employee relationships.

• **UNDERSTANDING**

22. How should we treat fellow Christians?

23. Which of your family members need your active care?

24. When and how have you learned from the mistakes of others?

25. In what negative ways does favoritism affect how we treat others?

26. How can we keep ourselves pure in a society that does not support God's ideals?

27. In what way might our sins and good deeds precede us and follow us in life?

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“Godliness with Contentment”

HEART ATTITUDE: Seeking Godliness, Pleasing God

“But godliness with contentment is great gain” (verse 6) is the key to spiritual growth and personal fulfillment. When we honor God and center our lives on Him, we will turn to Him first for help, we will fill our thoughts with His desires, we will take His character for our pattern, and we will serve and obey Him in everything. We will reap “godliness.”

Paul knew how to be content under all circumstances. We can trust God to always meet our needs (not necessarily our wants). We must rely on God's promises and Christ's power to help us be content. If we find we want more, we must ask God to remove that desire and teach us contentment. His focus is spiritual. Is yours?

1 TIMOTHY 6:3-12 (NIV)

If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching,

⁴He is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions

⁵And constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

⁶But godliness with contentment is great gain.

⁷For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.

⁸But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

⁹People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

¹⁰For 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.

¹¹But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

¹²Fight 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.

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• **FOCUSING**

1. What evidence do you see of a lack of love for godly teaching?

2. Why do you think most people are or aren't content with what they have?

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• **STUDYING GOD'S WORD**

3. What do false teachers ignore? (6:3)

4. What harsh words did Paul have for those who teach false doctrines? (6:3-4)

5. In what did the false teachers of Paul's day have an unhealthy interest? (6:4)

6. What was the result of the false teachers' unhealthy interests? (6:4-5)

7. What did the false teachers of Paul's day really want? (6:5)

Paul told Timothy to avoid those who preached for profit, who strayed from the sound teachings of the Gospel into small doctrinal differences which causes strife in the church. Division often begins with quibbling over minute points of theology, which leads to all sorts of problems. A person's understanding of the finer points of theology should not become the basis for lording it over others or making money. Instead, theology should always unify Christians. Stay away from those who just want to argue.

8. What brings us great gain? (6:6)

9. What do we bring into the world? (6:7)

10. What will we take out of the world? (6:7)

11. With what should we be content? (6:8)

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12. What often happens to people who want to get rich? (6:9)

13. What is a root of all kinds of evil? (6:10)

14. What price do some people eager for money pay? (6:10)

Verses 6-10. Most people still believe that money brings happiness, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Rich people covet greater riches get caught in an endless cycle of amassing more wealth. Poor people often feel victimized, resenting those who have more than they.

15. What did Paul tell Timothy to pursue? (6:11)

How can you avoid the love of money? Paul's guidelines:

- a. Realize that one day riches will all be gone (6:7, 17).
- b. Be content with what you have (6:8).
- c. Monitor what you are willing to do to get more money (6:9-10).
- d. Love people more than money (6:11).
- e. Love God's work more than money (6:11).
- f. Freely share what you have with others (6:18).

16. What was Timothy urged to fight? (6:12)

17. What did Paul tell Timothy to take hold of? (6:12)

18. Before whom did Timothy make a confession? What kind? (6:12)

• **UNDERSTANDING**

19. What controversial false doctrines have been an issue in your church?

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20. How could someone think that godliness was a means to financial gain?

21. How do people attempt to incorporate the person of Jesus into non-Christian teaching for their own purposes or profit?

22. Why is it hard to be content?

23. What would it take to make you content right now?

24. What get-rich-quick schemes (big or small) have you fallen for?

25. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being very important), how important is money to you? Why, why not?

26. Why do you think that money is important or not very important?

27. How can you guard against placing too much stock in your personal possessions?

28. How does “the good fight” bring you around an eternal perspective?

29. In what way is the Christian life a fight?

30. How are we to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness?

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“Guard the Truth”

HEART ATTITUDE: Living for the King

Are you on the side of truth? Do you listen to your King? Is there a greater privilege in life than to be entrusted with the Truth?

Paul concludes his first letter to Timothy with the charge “to keep this command” This may refer to the commands Christ gave His disciples, or to Timothy's promise to serve Christ. Paul compared Timothy's confession of faith to Christ's before Pilate: “In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me” (John 18:37, NIV).

Why were you born?

1 TIMOTHY 6:13-21 (NIV)

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

¹⁴To keep this command without spot

or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

¹⁵Which God will bring about in his own time--God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

¹⁶Who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.

To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

¹⁷Command 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.

¹⁸Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

¹⁹In 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.

²⁰Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care.

Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge,

²¹Which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith. Grace be with you.

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• **FOCUSING**

1. What sort of goals do people in your profession or lifestyle tend to pursue?

2. What goals do TV commercials and print ads encourage us to pursue?

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• **STUDYING GOD’S WORD**

3. When did Jesus make “the good confession”? (6:13)

4. How long was Timothy supposed to keep Paul’s command? (6:14-15)

5. When will Christ return? (6:14-15)

6. What titles and attributes did Paul ascribe to God? (6:15-16)

7. Why should those who are rich not be arrogant or put their hope in wealth? (6:17)

8. What command is given to those who are rich? (6:18)

9. Why would someone want to lay up treasure for themselves? (6:19)

Ephesus was a wealthy city and the church probably had wealthy members. Paul advised Timothy to teach that having riches carries responsibility. Those who have money must be generous, not arrogant because they have a lot to give. They must be careful not to put their trust in money instead of in the living God for their security. Even if we don't have material wealth, we can be rich in good works toward others. No matter how poor we are, we have something to share with everyone — the Gospel!

10. What was Timothy to guard? (6:20)

11. What was Timothy to turn away from? (6:20)

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12. How had some Christians wandered away from the truth? (6:20-21)

• **UNDERSTANDING**

13. Before whom have you made a confession of your faith? When?

14. How do God's attributes influence your worship of Him?

15. Why is it so easy for us to trust in our possessions, accomplishments, or abilities?

16. In what ways do people place their treasure here on earth?

17. How can a person lay up treasure in heaven?

18. How is it possible for someone to wander away from the faith?

19. What actions will you take that will store treasure in heaven for you? Be specific:

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• **DOING THE WORD**

20. What preventive measure will you take each day to be sure that you don't wander from the faith?

21. Is Jesus your king? Why?

22. How will you guard His truth? Explain:

May God richly bless you as you guard His Truth!

“Be Faithful”

HEART ATTITUDE: Pleasing God

Christ was faithful to all of us in dying for our sin. Paul was a faithful minister even when he was imprisoned. Paul urged Timothy not only to maintain sound doctrine, but also loyalty, diligence and endurance.

We can count on opposition, suffering and hardship as we serve Christ. But this shows that our faithfulness is having an effect on others. As we trust Christ, He counts us worthy to suffer and will give us the strength we need to be steadfast.

2 TIMOTHY 1:1-18 (NIV)

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

²*To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

³*I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.*

⁴*Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy.*

⁵*have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.*

⁶*For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

⁷*For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*

⁸*So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me His prisoner.*

But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God,

⁹*Who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,*

¹⁰*But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

¹¹*And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.*

¹²*That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him for that day.*

¹³*What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.*

¹⁴*Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you— guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.*

¹⁵*You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.*

¹⁶*May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.*

¹⁷*On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me.*

¹⁸*May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day!*

You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus.

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• **FOCUSING**

1. What is characteristic of the people you enjoy being around?

2. In what ways have your parents or grandparents significantly shaped your life?

• **STUDYING GOD'S WORD**

3. What did Paul do night and day? (1:3)

Paul consistently prayed for Timothy, his friend and son in the faith, and a strong leader in the Christian church. Although the two men were separated from each other, their prayers provided a source of mutual encouragement. We too should pray consistently for others, especially for those with whom we do God's work.

4. Why did Paul long to see Timothy? (1:4)

We don't know when Paul and Timothy last parted — the tears they shed at parting reveal the depth of their relationship.

5. Who were Lois and Eunice, and what did Paul say about them? (1:5)

Eunice and Lois were early Christian converts (Acts 16:1). They communicated their strong faith in Jesus to Timothy, even though his father was probably not a believer. This reminds us to not hide our "light" at home: our families are fertile fields for Gospel seeds. Let everyone know of your faith in Jesus, and be sure they see His love, helpfulness and joy in you.

6. What was Timothy reminded to do? (1:6)

At the time of his ordination, Timothy received special gifts of the Spirit to enable him to serve the church (see I Timothy 4:14). In telling Timothy to "fan the flame" of those gifts, Paul was encouraging him to persevere. Timothy did not need new revelations or new gifts; he needed the courage and self-discipline to hang on to the truth and use the gifts he had already received (see 1:13-14). If he would step out boldly in faith and proclaim the Gospel once again, the Holy Spirit would go with him and give him power.

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Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

7. What kind of spirit does God give to His people? (1:7)

Timothy was experiencing great opposition to his message and to himself as a leader. His youth, his association with Paul, and his leadership had come under fire from believers and non-believers. Paul urged him to be bold. When we allow people to intimidate us, we neutralize our effectiveness for God. The power of the Holy Spirit can help us overcome our fear of what some might say or do to us.

The three characteristics of the Christian leader are available to us because the Holy Spirit lives in us. See Galatians 5:22-23 for another list of these characteristics from the Holy Spirit.

8. In what way did Timothy need courage? (1:8)

Timothy's fears about continuing to preach the Gospel were based on fact. Paul had warned him that suffering would come: Timothy would also be jailed for preaching the Gospel (Hebrews 13:23). But Paul promised Timothy that God would give him strength and that he would be ready when it was his turn to suffer. Even when we are not persecuted, it can be difficult to share our faith in Christ. Fortunately, we can call on the Holy Spirit to give us courage.

9. Why has God called you to a holy life? (1:9)

10. What did Christ do? (1:10)

God loves you, He chose you, and He sent Christ to die for you. You have eternal life through faith in Him, because He broke the power of death with His resurrection. You don't deserve it. Nonetheless, God offers you salvation. All you have to do is believe and accept His offer.

11. For what was Paul appointed a herald, an apostle, and a teacher? (1:11)

12. Why was Paul not ashamed of the gospel? (1:12)

The phrase "guard what I have entrusted to Him for that day" has three main interpretations:

- a. Paul knew God would guard the souls of those converted through his preaching;
- b. he trusted God to guard his own soul until the Second Coming; OR
- c. he was confident that God would carry out the Gospel ministry through others such as Timothy, who was discouraged by the problems in Ephesus and fearful of persecution.

Paul knew God was still in control.

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13. What did Paul tell Timothy to do with his training? (1:13)

14. What was Timothy to guard? (1:14)

15. Where does the Holy Spirit live? (1:14)

When you are facing difficult transitions, it is good to follow Paul's advice and look back at your experience. Who is the foundation of your faith? What gifts has the Holy Spirit given you? How can you build on the foundation that has already been laid, using the gifts you have already been given?

16. Who had deserted Paul? (1:16)

17. What had Onesiphorus done for Paul? (1:16-17)

18. What did Paul want the Lord to grant Onesiphorus? (1:18)

Nothing more is known about Phygellus and Hermogenes who evidently opposed Paul's ministry. Onesiphorus is given as a positive example in contrast to these men.

• **UNDERSTANDING**

19. For whom do you pray on a regular basis?

20. What family member or friend has had the biggest role in your spiritual growth and development?

21. What gifts has God given you?

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Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

22. How is the spirit of power, love, and self-discipline shown in your life?

23. When have you ever felt ashamed about something that you believe?

24. When and how have you suffered for the gospel?

25. What or whose pattern of sound teaching are you following?

26. When have you been refreshed by another believer?

27. How should God's faithfulness affect your commitment to Christ?

• **DOING THE WORD**

28. How will you encourage another believer today?

29. Who is someone for whom you will commit to pray for on a regular basis?

30. What person who has had a substantial impact on your spiritual life will you take the time to thank personally? Explain the person's impact on you:

May God richly bless you as you study His Word!

“Commitment”

HEART ATTITUDE: Eternal Hope

Good soldiers are not afraid to suffer. God is faithful to His children. Although we may suffer great hardships on earth, He promises that someday we will live eternally with Him. Paul was comforted by this eternal hope as he went through suffering and death, and it can be ours also.

The Holy Spirit helps us to be wise and strong. God honors our confident testimony even when we suffer. We must be committed to boldly utilize the gifts the Holy Spirit has given us. In the face of opposition and persecution, we must keep our eyes on God.

2 TIMOTHY 2:1-13 (NIV)

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

²And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

³Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

⁴No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer.

⁵Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules.

⁶The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.

⁷Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

⁸Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel,

⁹For which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God’s word is not chained.

¹⁰Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

¹¹Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with Him, we will also live with Him;

¹²If we endure, we will also reign with Him. If we disown Him, he will also disown us;

¹³If we are faithless, He will remain faithful, for he cannot disown Himself.

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• FOCUSING

1. Have you ever thought of yourself as a soldier, an athlete, a farmer?

2. Do you enjoy hard work? Why or why not?

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• **STUDYING GOD’S WORD**

3. What did Paul encourage Timothy to do with what he had been taught? (2:2)

How can we be “strong” in grace? Grace means “undeserved favor.” Just as we are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9), we should live by grace (Colossians 2:6). This means trusting completely in Jesus and HIS power, not trying to live the Christian life in our own strength. Depending ON grace and living IN grace contrast to the world's values, and in contrast to those like Phygellus and Hermogenes who deserted Paul and the faith.

4. How was Timothy to endure hardship? (2:3)

If the Church consistently followed this advice, it would expand geometrically as well-taught believers would teach others and commission them, in turn, to teach still others. Disciples need to be equipped to pass their faith on; our work is not done until new believers are telling others the Good News they have learned (see Ephesians 4:12-13).

5. How does a soldier limit himself? Why? (2:4)

6. What must an athlete do in order to win? (2:5)

7. What should a hardworking farmer receive? Why? (2:6)

Paul used a comparison with soldiers, athletes and farmers who must discipline themselves and be willing to sacrifice to achieve the results they want. Like soldiers, we have to give worldly security and endure rigorous discipline. Like athletes, we must train hard and follow the rules. Like farmers, we must work hard to enjoy the fruit of our labor. But we keep going despite suffering because of the thought of victory, the vision of winning, and the hope of harvest. All our suffering is made worthwhile by our goals of glorifying God, winning people to Christ, and one day living eternally with Him.

8. What was Paul’s gospel? (2:8)

At the heart of false teaching is an incorrect view of Christ. In Timothy’s day it was popular to assert that Jesus is divine but not human — God but not man. These days we too often hear that He is human but not divine— man but not God. Either view destroys the Good News that Jesus Christ has taken our sins on Himself and has reconciled God and man. Jesus is fully man and fully God. This is the ONLY Biblical view. (See Philippians 3:9-16.)

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9. Why was Paul willing to endure anything? (2:10)

We are free to choose between life and death, and yet God has chosen us. This is a mystery our finite minds cannot easily grasp. But even if we do not completely understand it, we can choose Jesus and be grateful that He has chosen us.

10. How did Paul encourage Timothy? (2:11-13)

11. What *trustworthy saying* did Paul leave with Timothy to encourage him? (2:11-13)

Jesus will stay by our side even when we have endured so much that we seem to have no faith left. We may be faithless at times, but Jesus remains faithful to His promise to be with us always, “even unto the end of the world” (see Matthew 28:20 and Romans 8:38-39). Only one thing can break our communication with God — if we turn against Him and refuse His help. Are you facing hardship? Don't turn from God — He promises you a wonderful future with Him.

• **UNDERSTANDING**

12. What is the most important commitment someone has made on your behalf?

13. What example do the soldier, the athlete, and the farmers set for you?

• **DOING THE WORD**

14. How will you reinforce your commitment to be a good soldier for the Lord?

15. How will your eternal hope impact your service in The Most Excellent Way?

May God richly bless you as you study His Word!

“A Workman Approved By God”

HEART ATTITUDE: Mature Focus

Good workers are not ashamed of their work. Life on earth is not a script which we meaninglessly act out. It is a time of deciding whether or not we will live for God, and then “living out” what we have decided. We should build our lives on God’s Word and build His Word into our lives — it alone tells us how to live for Him and serve Him. God will examine what kind of workers we have been for Him. Christians who ignore the Bible will certainly be ashamed at the judgment. Consistent and diligent study of God’s Word is vital; otherwise we will be lulled into neglecting God and our true purpose for living.

2 TIMOTHY 2:14-26 (NIV)

Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.

¹⁵*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

¹⁶*Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.*

¹⁷*Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,*

¹⁸*Who have wandered away from the truth.*

They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.

¹⁹*Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription:*

“The Lord knows those who are His,” and,

“Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.”

²⁰*In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble.*

²¹*If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.*

²²*Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

²³*Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.*

²⁴*And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.*

²⁵*Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,*

²⁶*And that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*

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• FOCUSING

1. Whose approval did you seek most as a teenager?
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2. When was the last time you felt thoroughly embarrassed?

3. What was the last really stupid argument you had with someone?

• **STUDYING GOD’S WORD**

4. What results from quarreling about words? (2:14)

5. How did Paul encourage Timothy to present himself before God? (2:15)

6. Why should we avoid godless chatter? (2:16)

We need to follow Paul’s advice, and remind others, to not argue over unimportant details or have foolish discussions (*godless chatter*), because such arguments are confusing, useless, and even harmful. We must study and know the Word of God so we can understand what it says and means (*correctly handles the word of truth*).

In important areas, we must carefully work through our disagreements. When we bicker long hours over words and theories that are not central to the Christian faith and life, we only provoke anger and hurt feelings. Even if such "godless chatter" reaches a solution, it gains little ground for the Kingdom. Learning and discussing are useful unless they keep believers constantly focusing on false doctrine and fruitless trivialities. It's a waste of time, time that could be used to work and serve our Lord.

7. What must everyone who confesses the name of the Lord do? (2:19)

False teachers are still spouting wicked lies. Some distort the truth; some dilute it; and some simply delete it by saying it no longer applies. But no matter how many people follow the liars, God's truth never changes, is never shaken, and will never fade.

8. What sort of articles are found in a large house? (2:20)

9. How could someone become an instrument used for noble purposes? (2:21)

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10. What was Timothy encouraged to flee from? (2:22)

Running away is usually considered cowardly. But wise people realize that removing themselves physically from temptation is often the most courageous action to take. We must flee from any-thing that produces evil thoughts (see 1 Timothy 6:11). Remove yourself physically from the situation. Knowing when to run is as important in spiritual battle as knowing when and how to fight.

11. What was Timothy encouraged to pursue? (2:22)

12. What produces quarrels? (2:23)

13. What must the Lord's servant do and avoid? (2:24)

14. How should we deal with those who oppose the Lord's servants? Why? (2:25)

15. What did Paul hope would happen to those who opposed the Lord's servant? (2:25-26)

As a teacher, Timothy helped those who were confused about the truth. Paul's advice to him, and to all God's people, is to be humble, patiently and courteously explaining the truth. Good teaching never promotes quarrels or foolish arguments. Whenever you are teaching in a The Most Excellent Way meeting, remember to listen to people's questions and treat them respectfully. At the same time, do not get embroiled in foolish debates. It is very important to treat the "sheep" lovingly and respectfully. When you talk too much or lord-it-over them, they will be resentful, and they will not grow and reproduce.

• **UNDERSTANDING**

16. About what sorts of things do you get into senseless arguments with other Christians? With non-believers?

17. What does it mean to be approved by God?

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18. How will you please God with your work?

19. What circumstances make you feel ashamed or embarrassed?

20. When are you tempted to engage in godless chatter or stupid arguments?

21. What false doctrines have destroyed the faith of someone you know?

22. How will you cleanse yourself from insignificant pursuits?

23. What evil desires of youth continually tempt you?

24. How do you usually deal with people who oppose you?

25. How should you deal with people who oppose you?

26. In what way have people in society today been taken captive by the devil?

• **DOING THE WORD**

27. How will you change your daily speech to weed out senseless and godless chatter?

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28. What will you do to flee temptation?

29. How will you be prepare yourself for the final judgment? Will you build your life on God's Word and build His Word into your life?

May God richly bless you as you live for Him and serve Him!

“Sense of Urgency for the Last Days”

HEART ATTITUDE: Personally Responsible

These are the Last Days. How many days remain until the Lord Jesus Christ comes for His Church? No one knows. Do you have a sense of urgency to share the Gospel with as many people as possible?

2 TIMOTHY 3:1-9 (NIV)

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days.

²*People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,*

³*Without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good,*

⁴*Treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—*

⁵*Having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.*

⁶*They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires,*

⁷*Always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.*

⁸*Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth—men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected.*

⁹*But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.*

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• FOCUSING

1. How you describe the world in which we live today?

2. What goals drive the people with whom you work and live?

• STUDYING GOD’S WORD

3. What did Paul call to our attention? (3:1)

Paul’s reference to the *last days* reveals his sense of urgency. The last days began after Jesus’ resurrection, when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers at Pentecost. These days will continue until His Second Coming. In other words, we are living in the last days.

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4. What will people be like in the last days? (3:2)

5. What will people lack in the last days? (3:3)

6. What will people in the last days love instead of God? (3:4)

The Scriptures' descriptive list of behaviors in the last days describes our society — even, sadly, many Christians. There is a comfortableness about superficial Christianity that should cause us to be uncomfortable. Check your life against this list (3:2-4). Don't give into society's pressures, your sinful nature's desires or the devil's wiles. Stand up against the evil, live as God would have His people live.

7. What kind of "godliness" will people have in the last days? (3:5)

The "form" or appearance of godliness includes going to church, knowing Christian doctrine, using Christian clichés, and following society's Christian traditions. Such practices can make us look good, but if the inner attitudes of belief, love and worship are lacking, the outer appearance and actions are meaningless. Paul warns us not to be deceived by people who appear to be Christians. We must examine ourselves as well. It may be difficult to distinguish the phonies from true Christians at first, but their lives will give them (us) away. The characteristics described in 3:2-4 are unmistakable, easily discerned.

8. What should you do with the kind of people Paul described? (3:5)

9. How do godless people exploit others? (3:6)

10. What controls the kind of godless people Paul described? (3:6)

11. What are godless people always doing? (3:7)

Women in Ephesus had no formal religious training because of their cultural background. They enjoyed their new freedom to study Christian truths, but their eagerness to learn made them a target for false teachers. We must watch out for men who would take advantage of these women. We must help them grow in their knowledge of the Word, because ignorance can make them vulnerable to deception.

It is possible to be a perpetual student and never graduate. Paul is not criticizing study and learning — he

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is warning about learning for learning's sake. Honest seekers are looking for answers. Remember this as you study God's Word. Seek to find God's truth and will for your life.

12. Why do certain people oppose the truth? (3:8)

13. To what historical figures were these godless people compared? (3:8)

14. Why will godless people not get very far? (3:9)

Sin has consequences, and no one will get away with it forever. Live each day as if your actions will one day be known to everyone. Now is the time to change anything you wouldn't want revealed later.

• **UNDERSTANDING**

15. Why do you think we are or are not living in the last days?

16. Why are there people like the ones Paul described?

17. Why is it so tempting to be a lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God?

18. How can someone have a form of godliness yet deny its power?

19. What relationship should we have with people who flaunt their ungodly behavior?

20. In what way does our society encourage people to let themselves be controlled by evil desires?

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21. In what way is the folly of ungodly people clear and apparent to everyone?

22. What do you think it means that godless people have depraved minds?

• **GETTING PERSONAL**

23. Are there organizations or people that you need to disassociate from? Why?

23. From what ungodly person or group do you need to encourage other believers to disassociate themselves?

24. What specific sinful attitude or behavior will you ask God to help you overcome? Explain:

25. Do you have a sense of urgency to clean-up your life? Why?

“Commitment to The Word”

HEART ATTITUDE: Good Stewardship of The Word

The Bible is not a collection of stories, fables, myths or merely human ideas about God. It is not just a human book. Through the Holy Spirit, God revealed His person and plan to certain believers who wrote down God’s message for His people (2 Peter 1:20-21). This process is known as “inspiration.” The writers wrote from their own personal, historical and cultural contexts. But even though they used their own minds, talents, language and style, they wrote what God wanted them to write. God inspired the Bible’s writing—its words are entirely authoritative for our faith and lives. The Bible is “God-breathed.”

2 TIMOTHY 3:10 – 4:8 (NIV)

^{3:10} *You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance,*

¹¹ *Persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.*

¹² *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

¹³ *While evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

¹⁴ *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,*

¹⁵ *And how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

¹⁶ *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,*

¹⁷ *So that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

^{4:1} *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:*

² *Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.*

³ *For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine.*

Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

⁴ *They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*

⁵ *But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

⁶ *For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure.*

⁷ *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

⁸ *Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing.*

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• **FOCUSING**

1. What is the importance of “sound doctrine?”

2. If the story of your life were made into a movie, what would be its title?

3. If you could be known for only one thing when you died, what would you want it to be?

4. Who is someone whose reputation you admire? Why?

• **STUDYING GOD’S WORD**

5. What did Timothy know about Paul? (3:10-11)

6. From what did Paul say the Lord rescued him? (3:11)

7. What will happen to everyone who wants to live a godly life? (3:12)

8. What will evil men and impostors do? (3:13)

Don’t expect false teachers and evil people to reform and change on their own. Left alone, they will become worse and worse.

9. What did Paul encourage Timothy to do? (3:14)

Like Timothy, we are surrounded by false teachings, and most of us are very busy. But we must not allow our society to distort or crowd out God’s eternal truth. Spend time every day reflecting on the foundation of your Christian faith found in God’s Word, the great truths on which you build your life. And remember the devoted men and women who taught them to you.

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Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

10. How long had Timothy known the holy Scriptures? (3:15)

Timothy became a Christian because his mother and grandmother taught him the Scriptures when he was a small child. The evangelist's work is important, but the parent's work is equally important. We should realize that teaching small children is both an opportunity and a responsibility. Are you teaching your children God's Word?

11. What are the holy Scriptures able to do? (3:15)

12. What is true of all Scripture? (3:16)

13. For what is Scripture useful? (3:16)

Because the Bible is inspired by God and is trustworthy, we need to read it and apply it in our lives. The Bible is our standard for testing everything else that claims to be true. It is our safeguard against false teaching, and our source of guidance for how we should live. It is our source of knowledge about how we are saved. God wants to show you what is true and equip you to live for Him.

14. For what good work does the Scripture equip the person of God? (3:17)

In our zeal for the "truth" of Scripture, we must never forget its "purpose" — to equip us to do good to others. As disciples of Christ, we must study Scripture so we will know how to do His work. Our knowledge of God's Word is useless unless it leads us to good works.

15. Who will Jesus Christ judge? (4:1)

16. For what did Paul want Timothy to be prepared? (4:2)

We believe in Christ today because people like Timothy were faithful to their mission. It may be inconvenient to take a stand for Christ or tell others about His love, but preaching and teaching the Word of God is the most important responsibility we have been given. The Most Excellent Way meeting is a fertile field for planting seeds of truth. Be prepared, courageous and sensitive to God-given opportunities to tell the Good News.

Be prepared in season and out of season means to always be ready to preach the Gospel, whether or not it is comfortable or convenient. (It is difficult to accept correction and to be rebuked — to be told to change. But no matter how much the truth hurts, we must be willing to listen so we can more fully obey God. When correcting others, we must be patient and gentle.)

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17. What time did Paul say was coming? (4:3)

“Itching ears” means hearing only what they want to hear.

18. What will people one day do with the truth? (4:4)

19. What did Paul instruct Timothy to do? (4:5)

20. Why was Paul ready for his impending death? (4:6)

21. What had Paul done? (4:7)

22. What was in store for Paul? (4:8)

23. To whom will God award a crown of righteousness? (4:8)

The laurel wreath was a symbol of triumph and honor, and was the prize awarded to winning athletes in ancient Rome. This may be what Paul was referring to when he spoke of a “crown.”

Paul confidently said he had been faithful to his call — he faced death calmly; he knew he would be rewarded by Christ. Is your life preparing you for death? Are you confident about your meeting with Jesus? The Good News is that the heavenly reward is not just for the giants of the faith, but for all who eagerly await Jesus' Second Coming. No matter how difficult the fight seems — keep fighting. When we are with Jesus, we'll know that it was all worth it!

• **UNDERSTANDING**

24. What sort of reputation do you desire? Describe:

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Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

25. What sort of reputation do you have at work, at school, and in your neighborhood?

26. When and how have you been persecuted for living a godly life?

27. What does it mean that the Bible is God-breathed?

28. In what ways should you use the Bible?

29. How equipped are you to do every good work?

30. What type of doctrines do people today like to hear?

31. In what way are all Christians able to be evangelists?

• **DOING THE WORD**

32. How will you use the Bible in your own spiritual growth this week ... until Jesus comes?

33. What will you do toward discharging all your duties?

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“Faithfulness to God’s Calling”

HEART ATTITUDE: Faithfulness

There are two ways to love the world. God loves the world as He created it and as it could be if it were rescued from evil. Others love the world as it is – sin and all. Our lives reflect the choices we make. Do you love the world as it could be if justice were done, the hungry were fed, and people loved one another? Or do you love what the world has to offer—wealth, power, pleasure—even if gaining it means hurting people and neglecting the work God has given you to do?

As Paul reached the end of his life on earth, he could look back and knew he had been faithful to God’s call. Timothy was Paul’s living legacy, a product of Paul’s faithful teaching, discipleship and example. Who are you training to serve God with you, and after you have moved on? It is our responsibility to keep the Word of God alive in order that it will be perpetuated, generation to generation (should the Lord tarry).

2 TIMOTHY 4:9-22 (NIV)

⁹Do your best to come to me quickly,

¹⁰for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. because he is helpful to me in my ministry.

¹²I sent Tychicus to Ephesus.

¹³When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

¹⁴Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm.

The Lord will repay him for what he has done.

because he strongly opposed our message.

¹⁶At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them.

¹⁷But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion’s mouth.

¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

¹⁹Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus.

²⁰Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus.

²¹Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers.

²²The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

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• **FOCUSING**

1. What person would you like to visit whom you haven’t seen in a while?

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2. When have you felt abandoned by your friends?

3. For what cause would you be willing to suffer?

• **STUDYING THE WORD**

Paul was virtually alone and probably lonely. No one had been there at his trial to speak in his defense (4:16), and Demas and others had left the faith (4:10). Only Luke had returned (4:11).

4. What did Paul want Timothy to do? (4:9)

5. What had Demas done? Why? (4:10)

Demas had been one of Paul's co-workers (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 1:24), but he deserted Paul because he loved worldly values and worldly pleasures.

6. Why did Paul want Timothy to bring Mark? (4:11)

7. What did Paul want Timothy to bring with him? (4:13)

Paul's arrest was probably so sudden that he was not allowed to return home to gather his personal belongings. As a prisoner in a damp and chilly dungeon, Paul asked Timothy to bring him a coat. Even more than the coat, he wanted his parchments. These may have included parts of the Old Testament, the gospels, copies of his own letters, or other important documents.

8. Who was Alexander? What did Paul say about him? How did Paul instruct Timothy to deal with Alexander? (4:14-15)

Alexander may have been a witness against Paul at his trial; and is mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20.

9. What happened at Paul's first defense? Was he bitter? (4:16)

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11. Of what was Paul convinced? (4:18)

Paul was affirming eternal life after death, not that he wouldn't die. Paul knew the end was near, and he was ready.

12. Write 4:22 in your own words as if you were writing to one who is faithful to in ministry.

As Paul reached the end of his life, he could look back and know he had been faithful to God's call. Now it was time to pass the torch to the next generation, preparing leaders to take his place so that the world would continue to hear the life-changing message of Jesus Christ.

Timothy was Paul's living legacy, a product of his faithful teaching, discipleship and example. Because of Paul's work with many believers, including Timothy, the world is full of believers today who are also carrying on the work.

What legacy will you leave behind?

Whom are you training to carry on your work?

It is our responsibility to keep the Word of God alive for the next generation.

• **UNDERSTANDING**

13. In what way are you tempted to love the world?

14. Why is it sometimes more tempting to love the world than to love God?

15. What about the world do we naturally tend to love?

16. What keeps Christians from holding on to their faith?

17. What people strongly oppose the Christian message today? Why?

• **DOING THE WORD**

18. How will you help a leader with his or her ministry?

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19. Who will you express thanks to for encouraging you and discipling you in God's Word?

20. Write a prayer to the Lord for His guidance and strength to tell the Good News to those He brings your way.

May the Lord richly bless you as you stay true to His Word!

“Leadership Tasks”

HEART ATTITUDE: Pure in Heart

TITUS 1:1-16 (NIV)

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God’s elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—

²*A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life,*

which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,

³*And at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,*

⁴*To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.*

⁵*The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.*

⁶*An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife,*

a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.

⁷*Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.*

⁸*Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.*

⁹*He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.*

¹⁰*For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group.*

¹¹*They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach--and that for the sake of dishonest gain.*

¹²*Even one of their own prophets has said, “Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.”*

¹³*This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith*

¹⁴*And will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth.*

¹⁵*To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.*

¹⁶*They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him.*

They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

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• **FOCUSING**

1. What characteristics do you think are necessary in a good leader?

2. What characteristics do you think are necessary in a good leader?

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3. What leader has had the most influence on you? How?

• **STUDYING GOD’S WORD**

4. How is Paul’s description of himself at the beginning of this letter significant? (1:1)

This formal greeting is more than the opening part of the letter. It is a statement of the place of the Word of God in the life of the local church. Paul was a servant and apostle according to the faith of the church (God's elect, chosen ones). His ministry was not apart from the church but tied directly to it. This “faith” is what Jude calls “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).” It is that deposit of truth that God gave to Paul (1 Timothy 1:11), and which Paul in turn had given to Titus and Timothy.

5. How did Paul describe the faith that he had? (1:1-2)

6. In light of Paul's reference to Titus, what kind of relationship did these two believers have? (1:4)

7. Why did Paul leave Titus in Crete? (1:5)

8. For what reason was it necessary to appoint elders in the towns? (1:5, 10)

9. What qualifications were necessary to be an elder in Titus's church? (1:6-9)

10. Why is it necessary for an elder to be blameless? (1:7)

11. What is the result of holding firm to the “trustworthy message”? (1:9)

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12. How should believers respond to “rebellious people” in the church? (1:10-13)

13. What were the rebellious people doing that Paul so strongly condemned? (1:11)

14. What did Paul tell his audience to pay no attention to? (1:14)

15. How is it possible to learn whether a person truly knows God? (1:16)

• **UNDERSTANDING**

16. What does it mean that, *To the pure, all things are pure*?

17. What does the relationship between Paul and Titus teach us about how we should treat other Christians?

18. Why is it necessary to appoint elders and leaders in the church?

19. Who are the overseers in your church?

20. To what extent should we choose church elders according to the guidelines in this passage?

21. How should the qualifications for a church leader be different from those for a leader outside of the church?

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22. Why do you think it is important for leaders' children to believe in the Lord and not be disobedient?

23. What work in the church has God entrusted to you?

24. What area of your character most needs your attention at this time in your life?

25. What are rebellious people in the church like?

26. How can you encourage others?

27. How should we treat rebellious people in the church?

28. What should our motivation be in correcting those who teach things they ought not to teach?

29. What do your actions reveal about your relationship with God?

• **GETTING PERSONAL**

30. What will you do in the next few days to encourage another Christian in his or her faith?

31. How will you show support for ministry leaders? When?

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“What Must Be Taught”

HEART ATTITUDE: Seeking Truth and Righteousness

TITUS 2:1-15 (NIV)

You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.

²*Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.*

³*Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.*

⁴*Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children,*

⁵*to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.*

⁶*Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled.*

⁷*In everything set them an example by doing what is good.*

In your teaching show integrity, seriousness

⁸*and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned,*

so that those who oppose you may be ashamed

because they have nothing bad to say about us.

⁹*Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything,*

to try to please them, not to talk back to them,

¹⁰*and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted,*

so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

¹¹*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.*

¹²*It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions,*

and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

¹³*while we wait for the blessed hope—*

the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

¹⁴*who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify*

for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good.

¹⁵*These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority.*

Do not let anyone despise you.

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• **FOCUSING**

1. How do parents teach their children their values and beliefs?

2. What religious beliefs were you taught growing up?

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• **STUDYING GOD’S WORD**

3. What main theme begins this chapter? (2:1)

Notice the emphasis on “sound doctrine” in these instructions to Titus. This is the *content* of the faith. Believers must be grounded in the truths of Scripture — then they won’t be swayed by the powerful oratory of false teachers, the devastation of tragic circumstances, or wide swings of emotion. Learn the Word, study theology (Biblical doctrine), apply principles to your life, and *do* what you learn is God’s way.

4. What is important for older men to be taught? (2:2)

5. How can older and younger Christians help each other? (2:2-8)

6. What must older women be taught? Why? (2:3-5)

7. What responsibility do older women have? (2:4)

8. What should younger women be taught? (2:4-5)

9. Why is it important for Christians to live blameless lives? (2:5)

Women who were new Christians were to learn how to have harmony in the home by watching older women who had been Christians for some time. We have the same need today. If you are of an age or position where people look up to you, can you be confident that your example is motivating younger believers to live in a way that honors God?

10. What advice did Paul give to younger men? (2:6-8)

This advice given to young men was very important. In ancient Greek society, the role of the husband/father was not viewed as a nurturing role, but merely a functional one. Many young men today have been raised in families where the father neglected his responsibilities to his wife and children. Husbands and fathers who are good examples of Christian living in their families are extremely important role models for young who need to *see* how it is done more than to be *told*.

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11. Who should set an example for others? How? (2:7)

12. What response did Paul hope for? (2:8)

13. How did Paul instruct slaves? Why? (2:9-10)

The standards set by Paul apply to any employee/employer relationship. Employees should always do their best work and be trustworthy, not just when the employer is watching. Businesses in the U.S. lose millions of dollars a year to employee theft and time-wasting. If all Christian employees followed Paul's advice, what a transformation it would make!

14. What does the grace of God bring? (2:11)

15. Why should all Christians, whether old or young, be taught? (2:11-14)

16. What motivation do we have to live righteous lives? (2:12-13)

The power to live the Christian life comes from Jesus Christ. Because Jesus died and rescued us from sin, we are free from sin's control. He gives us the power and understanding to live according to God's will and to do good. Then we will look forward to his wonderful return with eager expectation and hope.

17. How did Paul emphasize the importance of teaching all Christians? (2:15)

Paul told Titus to teach and *live* the Scriptures. We must also teach, encourage, and correct others when necessary. Although good teaching occurs in the pulpit, classrooms and small groups, much of the teaching Paul refers to must be done in the "classroom" of personal and family relationships.

• **UNDERSTANDING**

18. What does a person's lifestyle reveal about his/her beliefs?

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19. What should a Christian's lifestyle be like?

20. What responsibility do Christians have to each others?

21. What role should accountability play among Christians?

22. What will we learn about our attitude about work from Paul's instructions to slaves?

23. How will you make the Gospel attractive to unbelievers in the way you work?

24. What motivates you to live a godly life? Explain.

25. From what older, more mature believer do you want to learn?

26. How will you teach other Christians?

27. What do you have to share with other Christians about what you have learned in your own walk?

28. How will you ensure that what you teach other Christians, even by your own life's example, is in accordance with sound doctrine?

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• **DOING THE WORD**

29. Of all the advice Paul gives in his passage about how to live a holy life, what is one specific area that you will commit yourself to concentrate on regularly? Why? Explain:

30. How will you remind yourself each day that the way you work is a testimony to others?

31. What steps will you take to learn from another more mature Christian?

32. What steps will you take to share what you have learned with a younger believer?

May God richly bless you as you mature in His Word!

“Doing What Is Good”

HEART ATTITUDE: Thankfulness

TITUS 3:1-15 (NIV)

*Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities,
to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good,*

*²To slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate,
and to show true humility toward all men.*

*³At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved
by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy,
being hated and hating one another.*

⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared,

*⁵HE SAVED US, not because of righteous things we had done,
but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of
rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,*

⁶He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,

*⁷So that, having been justified by his grace,
we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

*⁸This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things,
so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to
doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.*

*⁹But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels
about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.*

¹⁰Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time.

After that, have nothing to do with him.

¹¹You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

*¹²As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at
Nicomolis, because I have decided to winter there.*

*¹³Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos
on their way and see that they have everything they need.*

*¹⁴Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good,
in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives.*

¹⁵Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with you all.

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• **FOCUSING**

1. What is the dirtiest job you ever had to do?

2. When is it beneficial to argue about an issue?

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3. In your experience, how can an argument damage a friendship?

• **STUDYING GOD’S WORD**

4. How does God want us to respond to authority? (3:1)

3:1-2 — As Christians, our first allegiance is to Jesus as Lord, but we also must obey our government and its leaders. Christians are not above the law, but keeping the civil law is only the beginning of our Christian responsibility. In a democracy, it is also important to be involved and to serve.

5. What saved Paul from his foolishness? (3:4)

6. Why does God save people? (3:4-5)

7. What role does the Holy Spirit play in a person's salvation? (3:5)

8. What is the result of being justified by faith? (3:7)

9. What did Paul tell Titus to stress? Why? (3:8)

3:3-8 — Paul summarized what Christ does for us when He saves us. We move from a life full of sin to one led by God’s Holy Spirit. *All* our sins, not merely some, are washed away. Washing refers to the water of baptism. In receiving baptism, the believer acknowledges Christ as Lord, recognizes Christ’s saving work, and identifies with the Christian community. We gain eternal life with *all* its treasures. We have the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and He continually renews our hearts. None of this occurs because we earned or deserved it; it is all a gift of God’s grace.

3:4-6 — All persons of the Trinity participate in the work of salvation. Based upon the redemptive work of His Son, the Father sends the Holy Spirit to wash away our sins continually renew us.

10. Why is it important to avoid controversies and arguments? (3:9)

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3:9 — Paul warned Titus, as he warned Timothy, not to get involved in arguments over unanswerable questions (2 Timothy 2:14). This does not mean we should refuse to study, discuss, and examine different interpretations of difficult Bible passages. Paul is warning against petty quarrels, not honest discussion that leads to wisdom. When foolish arguments develop, it is best to turn the discussion back to a track that is going somewhere or politely excuse yourself.

11. How should we treat a person who divides friends? (3:10-11)

3:9-11 — A person must be warned when he or she is causing division that threatens the unity of the church. This warning should not be a heavy-handed action, but should correct the individual's divisive nature and restore him or her to fellowship. A person who refuses to be corrected should be put outside the fellowship. As Paul said, he is "condemned of himself"—he is sinning and he knows it. (See also Matthew 18:15-18 and 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 for help in handling such problems in the church.)

12. Why is it important for us to do what is good? (3:14)

3:15 — The letters of Paul to Titus and Timothy mark the end of Paul's writing and the end of his life and ministry. These letters are rich treasures for us today because they give vital information for church leadership. They provide a strong model for elders, pastors, and other Christian leaders as they develop younger leaders to carry on the work, following Paul's example of preparing Timothy and Titus to carry on his ministry. For practical guidelines on church leadership and problem solving, carefully study the principles found in these letters.

• **UNDERSTANDING**

13. In what ways do you need to subject yourself to rulers and authorities?

14. What does it mean to show true humility?

15. How can you show humility in all you do?

16. What difference does it make that God saves us out of His great mercy, and not because of anything we do?

17. What role does the Holy Spirit play in your life?
