

The Most Excellent Way
Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

“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. (12)
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. (13)
The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. (14)
Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst (15). 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 (16).
Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen (17).
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 (18), Holding on to faith and a good conscience.
Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith (19). Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme (20).

The Holy Bible, New International Version.
Copyright 1978 by New York International Bible Society.

• **FOCUSING**

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

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

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

The Most Excellent Way

Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

- **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 murdered God's people ("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?

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)

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)

The Most Excellent Way

Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

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)

“Shipwrecked” means they wrecked their faith..

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?

-
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?
-

