

# 1 Timothy

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*INTRODUCTION*

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# INTRODUCTION TO 1 TIMOTHY

This term we're looking at the New Testament letter of 1 Timothy under the title, 'The Household of God.' This video is a brief introduction to the NT letter, where we'll be giving you some of the context and raise some of the key themes and topics of the letter to help orientate you to this series. We hope these studies are helpful, whether you're digging in to God's Word as a leader, a group member or solo.

## **Author & Genre**

One of the great things about most of the New Testament letters is that it's clear what we're reading and who wrote it, from the very first verse:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, <sup>2</sup>To Timothy my true son in the faith

This letter that we call 1 Timothy was originally written from the apostle Paul to his once ministry apprentice Timothy, probably around the 50s or 60s AD.

From the outset it's clear that Timothy was dear to Paul's heart, as he considers him 'my true son in the faith.' So as we read and study through this letter it's so important we don't lose sight of the personal and pastoral purpose of this letter. It's one of the reasons 1 Timothy is called one of the Pastoral Epistles, or pastoral letters, alongside 2 Timothy and Titus, for they are personal letters written from ministry mentor Paul to a dear younger brother in the faith.

## **Key Themes**

We're calling this series 'the Household of God' because it's actually fundamentally a letter about God – who he is, what he's done and why that matters to the people he has created and redeemed; and it's a letter about how God wants the church, his household, to conduct themselves under his good order with grace, love and a right zeal for his truth.

So the first key theme is **God**. It might be obvious to say that the word most often used in 1 Timothy is 'God' – 25 times in our NIV English translations, followed by the word 'faith' 20 times and the word 'good' 18 times. Paul writes many things about God, so just to whet your appetite, here are some of the things Paul wants Timothy, and us, to know about God: God is one being (2:5). He is the creator of all things, including marriage and food (4:3). He gives life to all things (6:13). As such he is transcendent, that is, out of this world. Listen to how Paul describes God in chapter 6 verse 15-16:

God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honour and might forever. Amen.

In chapter 1 verse 4 Paul describes 'God's work', which is literally 'God's household management.' God is the divine manager of the church, his household, 'the pillar and foundation of the truth' (3:15).

God is one being but in three persons: *God the Father* is the One by whose command Paul became an apostle (1:1). Alongside God the Son, God the Father is the source of all grace, mercy and peace (1:1).

*God the Son*, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the One who, chapter 1 verse 1, sent Paul as his apostle. He is 'our hope' (1:1). He is the One who 'came into the world to save sinners' (1:15). He displayed his 'great patience' with Paul in the lead up to Paul's conversion and calling to be an apostle (1:16). He is 'the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God' to whom belongs 'honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen' (1:17). He is the 'one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people' (2:5), and the One in whom we believe for eternal life and assurance in life as God's people (1:16; 3:13).

*God the Holy Spirit* was the One who 'vindicated' God the Son, the Lord Jesus, both in his life, death and triumphant resurrection (3:16). As the Spirit of the one true God, He is the One who tells us there will be people who abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons (4:1).

As we dig into this letter it might be tempting to steer the conversation away from God towards other themes or ideas that are important but not central to Paul's letter. But as we dig into the details it's so important that the first and fundamental thing we consider is what it's saying about God, who he is and what he's done, before we jump to what we think it means for how we should live.

The second key theme is the **household** of God, which is 'the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth' (3:15). Within God's household, he has given order for the care and wellbeing of his people and the preservation and proclamation of his Word. This order includes leaders such as 'overseers' (3:1-7), 'elders' (5:17-19), 'deacons' (3:8-13), men (2:8), women (2:9-15) and children (3:4; cf. 2:15); young men, older men; young women and older women (5:1-2). Within his diverse household he has given people from all walks of life including widows, older and younger (5:3-15), masters, slaves (6:1-2), the rich (6:13-21) and the poor. In chapter 1 verse 10 the words 'sound doctrine' literally mean 'healthy teaching' – what is to be taught for the good spiritual health and wellbeing of the church. And so Timothy and the rest of the church's leaders must work hard to teach the Word and defend its truth against false teachers within the congregation and cultural influences which threaten God's household from outside (1:3-4; 4:1-16; cf. 6:3-5). The convictions God gives his people through the clear teaching of his Word bear fruit in conduct that accords with all that is true, glorious and good.

- One area of life together we'll be spending more time thinking about this term what 1 Timothy, and the Bible more broadly, teaches us about *women and men serving together in ministry and church life*. On **Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> of May, 7:30pm**, we'll be having a parish wide event right here on the topic. We'll be joined by two women, Kara Hartley and Ruth Schroeter, alongside our senior minister David Smith. Kara and Ruth will be sharing about their personal journeys of wrestling with, understanding and obeying the teaching of Scripture on this. And we'll have the opportunity to ask them questions whether via text or from the floor as well. They'll help us think through this important topic together. It's a night not to be missed!

### ***Why This Series Matters***

From what I've already said about this letter I hope it's clear why digging into this part of God's Word is so important, especially for a time such as we live in. With cultural pressure outside the church increasingly influencing the household of God, we need to be armed with confidence in the clarity, goodness and power of God's Word to respond in a way that accords with what God says is true, glorious and good for his people.

But also, as people who still get it wrong, are led to believe all sorts of things, and who's hearts are still led astray by the false values and destructive ways of this world, we also need to know what God says about how we ought to think of him, each other and how we should live together as God's people, his household.

### ***How to Use The Study Notes***

As we've done for some time now the study notes are structured under three main components: Getting Started questions, Into the Text questions and Takeaway questions. *Getting Started* questions are designed to be icebreakers, to help encourage people to talk, share and hear from one another. As people share from their own experiences and opinions they're more likely to talk and engage in discussion throughout. This also helps us get to know each other and grow in relationship with one another as we approach God's Word together. The Getting Started questions also tie in to the passage to hopefully get us thinking and preparing for what God's Word will have to say to us.

The *Into the Text* questions are designed to help us understand the context of the passage, make some observations, tease out the meaning of what we see in the passage, so that we might have a firm foundation for understanding how God is calling us to live as his people.

Finally, the *Takeaway* questions are designed to help us think more concretely and specifically about how to respond to what God has taught us in his Word.

Group leaders shouldn't feel bound to the order or content of the study questions, but they should at least work through the study questions in prayerful preparation to lead their groups in Bible discussion. You might want to spend longer on a question or cut out other questions in order to better grasp a particular part of the passage your group may be wrestling with or find especially tantalising!

As you open up this part of God's Word, this personal letter from Paul to Timothy, with all its theological richness and clear instruction, I pray you will grow to know the God who rules and reigns over all things more and more. I pray that you will also grow to see how his ways, including how he commands us his household to conduct ourselves together under his care and Lordship. And that as you grow to know this God and how to live as his household together the fellowship we share in Christ will deepen and spread to friends, family, neighbours, visitors – all whom we meet. To God alone be the glory through Christ, in the power of the Spirit in the lives of his household, the church. Amen!