

RAY C. STEDMAN

# Adventuring Through the Bible

A Comprehensive Guide to the Entire Bible

*New Enhanced Edition*



## *Adventuring Through the Bible*

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Timelines for each chapter developed by Dr. Dick Sterkenburg

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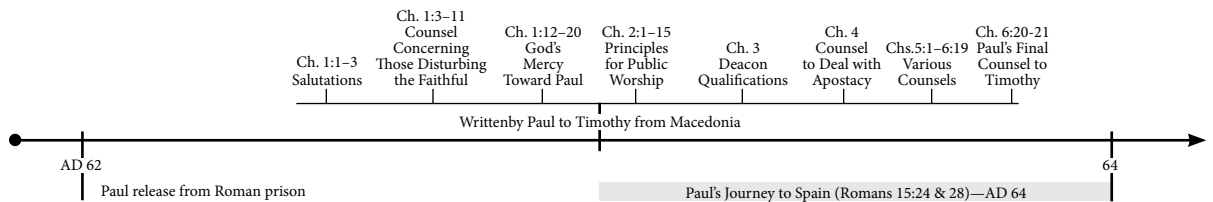
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*How to Build a Church*

What happens when Christians gather together at church? Charles Swindoll answers that question in his book *Come Before Winter* and *Share My Hope*:

See you Sunday. That's when the Body and the Head meet to celebrate this mysterious union, . . . when ordinary, garden-variety folks like us gather around the pre-eminent One. For worship. For encouragement. For instruction. For expression. For support. For the carrying out of a God-given role that will never be matched or surpassed on earth—even though it's the stuff the world around us considers weird and weak (Charles R. Swindoll II, *Come Before Winter* and *Share My Hope* [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1985], 403–4).

Yes! Although the world truly does consider the church to be “weird and weak,” we know that the church is the most powerful instrument in history of mankind. Jesus Himself said, “On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matt. 16:18).

In Paul's first letter to Timothy, we are given a set of detailed instructions, a blueprint that shows us how to build a church. Jesus Himself is the architect, the master builder, but we are the carpenters,

bricklayers, painters, and carpet layers. So if we want to build His church in a way that pleases Him, we had better read the blueprint He's given us—the blueprint found in 1 Timothy.

### Paul's Letters to Timothy

Paul wrote two letters to Timothy, a young man whom he had won to Christ when he preached in Lystra. The second was unquestionably the last letter we have from his pen. The first was written a few years earlier, probably immediately after the apostle Paul was imprisoned in Rome for the first time.

Timothy was probably no more than sixteen years old at the time he found Christ, and was in his late twenties or early thirties at the time 1 Timothy was written. Timothy accompanied Paul on his second missionary

### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

This chapter examines God's blueprint for building a functioning, healthy church—rules for worship, roles of leaders and servants, how to guard against false teaching, how to discipline sinful behavior, how to care for people in need, and how to prevent favoritism and unfair treatment of church members. In two thousand years, the pattern for a healthy church has not changed.

LEFT: Mosaic walkway at Caesarea by the sea

journey and was a faithful minister and son in the faith for the rest of Paul's life.

First Timothy is one of three pastoral letters in the New Testament—letters written from a pastor's viewpoint; the other two are 2 Timothy and Titus. In these letters, Paul expresses his intimate thoughts to the two young men he mentored in the ministry, both of whom frequently accompanied him on his journeys.

Despite his close teacher-mentor, father-son relationship with Timothy, Paul begins both of his letters with similar and rather formal statements:

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope (1:1).*

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will*

*of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 1:1).*

Timothy certainly did not need the reminder that Paul was an apostle of Christ Jesus; he knew Paul's position well. But Paul expected these letters to have a wider readership than Timothy alone. His previous letters had frequently been circulated among the churches, and he knew these letters would also be circulated. So it is with the authority of an apostle that Paul begins these two letters.

### **The Outline of 1 Timothy**

Paul's first letter to Timothy concerns the ministry of the church itself: its character, its nature, and its function in the world. His second letter pertains to the message that the church is to convey to the world—the gospel



# THE BOOK OF 1 TIMOTHY

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## TRUE AND FALSE DOCTRINES (1 TIMOTHY 1)

THE DANGER OF FALSE DOCTRINE; TEACH THE TRUTH 1:1–17

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT, HOLD ON TO FAITH 1:18–20

## CHURCH WORSHIP (1 TIMOTHY 2)

RULES FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP; THE ROLE OF WOMEN 2

## CHURCH LEADERSHIP (1 TIMOTHY 3)

QUALIFICATIONS OF CHURCH LEADERS (BISHOPS AND DEACONS) 3:1–13

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## WARNINGS AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS (1 TIMOTHY 4)

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EXHORTATIONS TO SERVANTS 6:1–2

GODLINESS WITH CONTENTMENT IS GAIN 6:3–16

EXHORTATION TO THE RICH 6:17–19

GUARD WHAT HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED TO YOU 6:20–21

of Jesus Christ—and Timothy’s relationship to that message.

### **The True Christian Church and True Christian Love**

Two themes intertwine throughout the book of 1 Timothy: the true nature of the Christian church and the true nature of Christian love. A powerful expression of this first theme, the true nature of the church, is found in chapter 3:

*Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth (3:14–15).*

When Paul writes about “the church of the living God,” he is clearly not talking about a *building*; he is talking about *people*. In fact,

he is talking about a family, God’s household. One of the great weaknesses of present-day Christianity is that we tend to think of the church as a building or an organization. Paul wanted Timothy to know how to conduct himself in the ministry and the relationships of the body of Christ, the church of the living God.

We find a powerful expression of the second theme of this letter, the true nature of Christian love, in chapter 1:

*The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith (1:5).*

This is a more personal theme, concerned with the individual’s relationship to the world, to other Christians, and to God. As the apostle puts it, this second theme states that the Christian’s relationships are to consist of love—pure, sincere, Christlike love.

Authentic Christian love always begins with a sincere faith, for that is how we enter into the Christian life: by believing God’s Word and exercising faith in what it says. Then, we are led to a good conscience and a pure heart that loves in obedience to His Word. We all come to God in need of being purified by the washing of the Word of God and the cleansing of the blood of Christ. But if we have a good conscience about our faith, it will result in a pure heart; and from that pure heart will flow an unceasing stream of love.

### **The Danger of False Teaching**

When Paul wrote this letter, Timothy was the pastor of the church in Ephesus. The city of Ephesus was largely devoted to the

#### **WHAT IS AN APOSTLE?**



The apostles were men with a unique ministry who had been commissioned by the Lord Himself. They were given the task of speaking authoritatively on doctrine and practice in the church. In the first century, some people spoke disparagingly of Paul, just as people sometimes do today: “Well, you know, Paul wrote some things that we cannot take as authoritative. He was a confirmed old bachelor, and what he said about women is not really significant.” But to say such a thing is to deny the apostolic office and to refuse the authority that the Lord Jesus gave His apostles, including the apostle Paul.



Gate of Augustus at Ephesus



Library at Ephesus



Theater at Ephesus

worship of the pagan goddess Diana (also called Artemis), the Greek goddess of love. Timothy's task was to minister to a body of believers who were living in that morally and spiritually corrupt environment. The church stood in opposition to the idolatry and superstition of the spiritually dark culture that surrounded them, much as we are called to oppose the spiritual darkness and idolatry that surrounds us today.

So the first counsel the apostle offers Timothy is an exhortation to oppose false teaching. The early church had its share of heretics and false teachers, as does today's

church. The Ephesian church had apparently been infiltrated by false teachers, so Paul warns Timothy:

*As 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 nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work—which is by faith (1:3–4).*

One of the problems in the church was a wrong understanding of the law. It seems



some church leaders were trying to control the conduct of the Ephesian Christians through regulations—that is, through legalism. These legalists who infected the church did not understand the power of the indwelling life and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Using the law to control people, says Paul, is destructive and misguided. The law is intended for a specific and valid purpose, yet these legalists were abusing the law:

*They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm. We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me (1:7–11).*

The law, says Paul, is made for the unrighteous, not the righteous. If you have come to Christ, and your heart is intent on pleasing Him, why do you need the law? You certainly don't need it to keep you from doing wrong. Love will take care of that!

But remember that love is interpreted by the law. We understand what love is only when we see it spelled out for us in terms of the law: Do not lie, steal, kill, commit adultery, and so forth. These laws describe how true love behaves.

## **Instructions for Public Worship**

In chapter 2, Paul turns to instructions for public worship. He begins by differentiating between the roles of men and women in public worship. Men, he says, are to lead in prayer, praying for kings and those in authority, so that citizens might live in peace and godliness. Then he turns to the role of women in the church; a passage that is sometimes used (usually by men) to suggest that women have an inferior position in the church.

We must understand the significant difference between someone's *role* and someone's *importance*. In the church, we all have different roles, but we are all equally important. As Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12, the eye can't say to the hand, nor the head to the feet, "I'm the important one here. The body does not need you as much as it needs me." All are necessary, all are equally important, but each has a different role to play. Paul differentiates between the roles of men and women in the church in these verses:

*I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women*

*will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety (2:8–15).*

Paul is not saying that women have no right to minister and pray in public like men, although some have misinterpreted the passage that way. Rather, he is saying that women are not to teach men authoritatively. They are not to be the final word in the church as to doctrine or teaching, and Paul gives two reasons. First, he says, Adam was formed first, then Eve. Second, the woman was deceived and therefore fell into transgression. It's interesting to note that Eve's sin was primarily that of trying to arrive at a theological conclusion apart from the counsel of her husband.

In a verse that has been somewhat garbled in translation and greatly misunderstood, the apostle goes on to show that women have a wonderful ministry. Women, Paul says in verse 15, will be saved through bearing children, if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty or propriety.

Now, we tend to assume that the pronoun "they" in the phrase "if they continue" refers to the women. I used to make that assumption myself. But I have come to believe that the pronoun "they" refers not to the women, but to their children. Paul is saying that women will be "saved" not in a spiritual sense, but in the sense of being fulfilled in their role as mothers, if their children continue on in the faith, demonstrating character qualities of love, holiness, and propriety. In other words, a woman need not feel that her ministry abilities have been wasted if she can't be a teacher in authority in the church. Her ministry potential will be saved, because she

can have the wonderful ministry of raising her children to walk with God.

At first, you might think that this is a misinterpretation of the word "saved." But let's look at this word carefully. Could "saved" be interpreted to mean that Paul is making an ironclad guarantee that a woman who lives in faith, love, holiness, and propriety will never die in childbirth—that she will be *physically* saved no matter what medical complications might arise? Certainly, that cannot be what Paul is saying. Such a guarantee would be unreasonable. Down through the centuries, many godly, faithful, modest Christian women have died giving birth.

And it's equally clear from the context that the word "saved" does not refer to spiritual salvation, to being "born again" by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. So the word "saved" must have a different meaning. Does Paul ever use the word "saved" in a different sense than spiritual salvation? Yes, he does. In fact, he does so in this very same letter, in his exhortation to Timothy:

*Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (4:16).*

What does Paul mean here by the word "save"? Timothy was already saved in the spiritual sense; he had been a Christian for many years. And certainly other people could not be saved by Timothy's lifestyle of persevering in obedience to the truth. So what does Paul mean? He is using the word "save" in the sense of *fulfilling one's calling*. He is saying that Timothy's purpose in life will be saved, not wasted, if he perseveres in obedience to the truth.

Paul uses “saved” in a similar sense in his letter to the Philippians, where he writes, “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling”—that is, work out the solutions to the problems you confront with fear and trembling, because “it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Phil. 2:12–13). So here in 1 Timothy 2:15, I believe Paul means that a woman “will be saved” in the sense that her desire for a ministry will be fulfilled through bearing children if she raises her children to continue in faith, love, and holiness with modesty.

### **Church Leadership**

Next, Paul turns to the qualifications of church leaders, which fall into two major categories: bishops (or elders) and deacons. Broadly defined, bishops, or elders, are decision-makers in the church. Deacons are men and women who perform a special task or function in the church, such as caring for the sick and aged, working in an outreach ministry, or teaching a Sunday school class.

Paul begins by stating three crucial qualifications for bishops, or elders. First, they are to be “blameless,” so as to avoid being disapproved. Second, they are to be pure; that is, they are to be people of proven integrity who understand how to tell the difference between good and evil, and who live according to God’s Word. Paul gives this requirement of purity so as to avoid pride. The great risk in placing a spiritually immature person in leadership is that he or she may be lifted up with pride and fall into the trap of the devil. Third, these people are to be of good reputation, to avoid public scandal that would bring the whole ministry of the church into disgrace.

Deacons are treated similarly, but Paul adds one major instruction concerning them: they are first to be tested, to be given work to do on a trial basis. If they perform it well, they are recognized as people who can be trusted with responsibility in the work of the church. The importance of this charge is that it all relates to the fact that the church is linked with the mystery of Christ. Christ is the greatest figure in the universe—everything relates to Him. Paul quotes a first-century hymn to set forth what he means:

*Beyond 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 (3:16).*

Paul puts the church in its proper perspective. We must select leaders with great care, because the church represents Jesus Christ to the world.

### **The Importance of Preaching the Truth**

In chapter 4, Paul turns to the subject of apostasy. Although the terms “apostate” and “heretic” are often used interchangeably, they are not the same. A heretic is a misguided Christian, one who accepts and knows the Lord Jesus Christ, but who has veered away from sound, biblical doctrine in some area of the faith. An apostate is a person who may claim to be a Christian, but has never truly been a Christian, and whose “gospel” is a false message that leads people away from the truth.

The apostle John describes a group of apostates in his first letter, “They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us” (1 John 2:19).

In Matthew 13, the Lord tells the story of the sower who went out to sow the good seed of the kingdom. In the middle of the night, an enemy came behind him, sowing weeds in the same fields. The good grain and the weeds came up together. Jesus said these good and bad plants would remain intermingled until the harvest, which is why we will never get rid of the apostates in the church.

Apostate attitudes arise when people follow doctrines of demons and deceitful spirits. Apostasy is not rooted in twisted human ideas, but in the deliberately deceitful ideas of wicked spirits who sow spiritual “weed seed” in order to pollute the kingdom of God and lead people astray.

Paul goes on to say that only when the evil of the apostates becomes evident, is Timothy to excommunicate them, not before. His first priority is not to weed out evil and deception, but to preach the truth. His next priority is to set an example for the people in his own personal life:

*Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you (4:13–14).*

Too many Christians have forgotten the message of Jesus and Paul regarding apostasy. They see their ministry in the church as being

a Christian weed whacker, mowing down all the weeds in the Lord’s garden. The problem with a weed whacker is that it’s easy to mow down a lot of fruit-bearing plants at the same time, especially when the weeds and the good plants are growing up close together.

Both Jesus and Paul tell us not to use the weed whacker approach. Instead, our goal is to keep the good plants in the garden as strong and weed resistant as possible through preaching, teaching, and the reading of God’s Word.

### **Church Discipline and Other Admonitions**

In chapter 5, Paul discusses specific issues and problems within the church, including how to treat younger and older people, as well as advice to women on various practical matters. Paul then addresses the problem of how to handle accusations against the elders. Finally, Paul exhorts Timothy to remain pure and gives him some home remedy advice for his chronic digestive problems.

Chapter 6 begins with an address to those Christians living “under the yoke of slavery.” He reminds them that they should consider their masters worthy of respect so that God’s name and Christian teaching will not be slandered.

Having begun by addressing the poor and enslaved, Paul concludes by assigning Christian responsibilities to those who have prospered materially. They have been blessed by God so that they can be a blessing to others, not so that they can indulge themselves and their own desires. The rich have a responsibility to be rich in good deeds and generosity, laying a foundation for the future so that they can take hold of the truly abundant life right

now—not abundant in material possession but abundant in the things of God (see 1 Tim. 6:18–19).

In closing, Paul entrusts to Timothy a message of warning that he should share with those who place their trust in human knowledge:

*Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith. Grace be with you (6:20–21).*

Paul's first letter to Timothy is a letter for our own times and our own churches. It provides an objective standard against which to measure our modes of worship, evaluate church leaders, and remain true to sound beliefs and doctrines. In short, this letter offers clear instructions from God on how to build a church.

Truly, 1 Timothy is a letter for the first century as well as the twenty-first century. May God grant us eager, obedient hearts to read it, understand it, and live by it day by day.

## **1 TIMOTHY**

### **HOW TO BUILD A CHURCH**

1. Read 1 Timothy 1:1–11. What kind of false teaching is Paul concerned about? What does Paul say is the opposite of (and antidote to) false teaching?

2. Read 1 Timothy 1:12–17. What effect has the gospel of Jesus Christ produced in Paul's life? Why, according to Paul, did God show mercy to him?

3. Do you agree or disagree with Paul's teaching regarding women teaching in the church (see 2:8–15). Why or why not? Do you think Paul's instructions were for that particular time in the church, or for all time? Explain your answer.

4. Read 1 Timothy 3:1–7. When listing the qualifications for church leadership, Paul focuses on a leader's personal character, experience in the Christian faith, general reputation, and leadership skills and abilities. Why does Paul put so much emphasis on issues of faith, character, and integrity? Does your church select leaders on the same basis that Paul states here, or does your church tend to select leaders who are successful business leaders?

Read 1 Timothy 3:8–13. How do the qualifications for deacons differ from the qualifications for a leader/overseer? Why are the qualifications different for these respective roles?

5. Read 1 Timothy 3:15, where Paul states his exalted view of the church. Is that how you see the church? Why or why not? How does this verse affect the way you view your brothers and sisters in your own local body of believers?

### ***Personal Application:***

6. Are you a minister, elder, board member, Sunday school teacher, or in any way involved in ministry in your church, or parachurch, organization? Read 1 Timothy 4, and based on the criteria in this chapter, give yourself a letter grade (A, B, C, D, F) as “a good minister of Christ Jesus.”

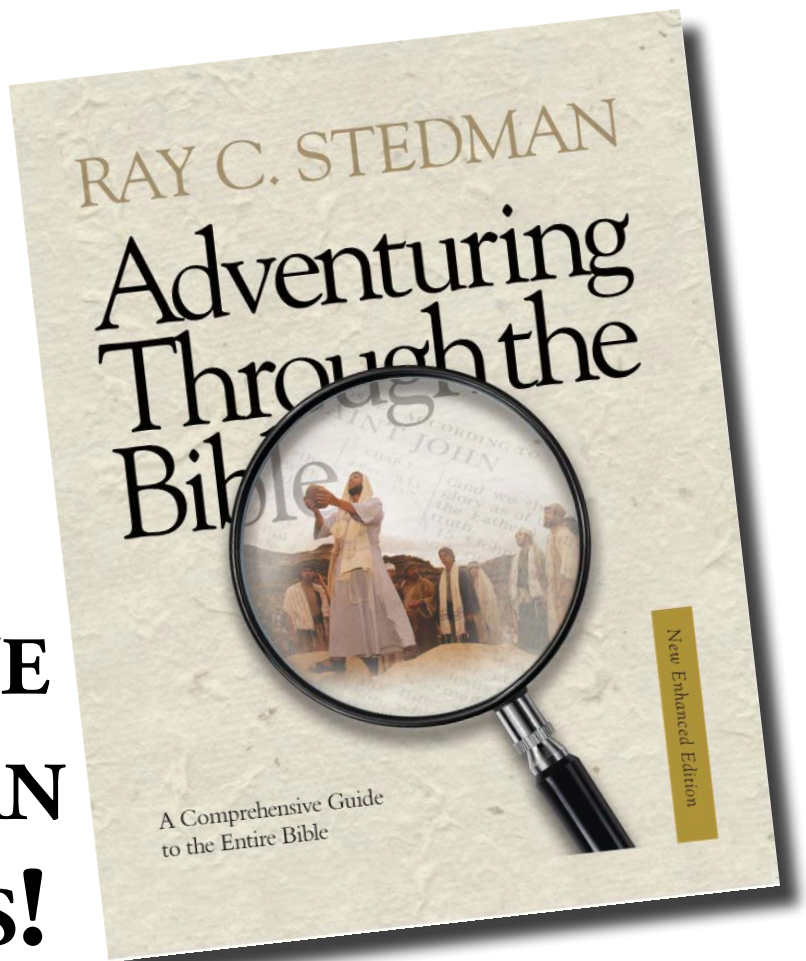
7. Looking at the qualifications for church leadership in 1 Timothy 3:1–7, how do you measure up? What are your strong areas? What are your weak areas? Also, compare yourself to the qualifications for deacons, 1 Timothy 3:8–13. Do you sense God calling you to get more involved in a leadership or service role in your church?

8. Read 1 Timothy 6:3–10. Are you dissatisfied with your present level of income? Do you feel cheated by life because others have prospered and you have not? Do you agree with Paul when he says, “godliness with contentment is great gain”? What steps can you take this week to become more content with godliness and more thankful for what God has provided for you?

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PLEASE NOTE: For an in-depth exploration of the epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, read *The Fight of Faith: Studies in the Pastoral Letters of Paul* by Ray C. Stedman (Discovery House Publishers, 2009).

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