

## 1 Timothy — Meet Timothy

**January 29, 2017**

Good morning. Welcome to CrossWinds. Today we start a new series titled, What is the Church? In this series, we are studying the book of 1 Timothy. Before we launch into the study, I want to give some background so we can understand Timothy the person, the place he pastored and the problems he faced. Without much fanfare, let's jump in.

### Who was Timothy?

**Timothy came from a spiritually divided home.**

We first meet Timothy in Acts 16 on Paul's second missionary journey in the city of Lystra (which is modern day Turkey). Timothy came from a mixed home. His mother's name was Eunice. She was a Jewish Christian. His father was a Greek who apparently never went to church. In the letter of 2 Timothy, Paul mentioned that the Christian faith started in their family with Timothy's grandmother named Lois; she shared the good news of Jesus with her daughter Eunice who then shared the gospel with her son Timothy when he was a child. What we find is Timothy's mother was one of those moms that slugged it out every week when it came to teaching her son about Jesus. She went to church on her own. She taught Timothy the Bible on her own. She presented the gospel to Timothy when he was a kid by herself. She made sure Timothy was at AWANA on Wednesday nights, and CW kids on Sunday morning. She prayed with him at bed time on her own. Dad was no support. How Eunice, a nice Jewish-Christian girl, ended up married to a Greek guy that wanted nothing to do with Jesus, we don't know. We do know that the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules

the world. This is what happened with Timothy. Eunice did a great job raising her son for Jesus. Her work paid off. He grew up to be a young man who loved Jesus and knew his Bible. When Paul came through town, he was so impressed with Timothy that he asked Timothy to join him and Silas on their missionary journey.

Timothy became a traveling companion of Paul and a leader in the church. Timothy was launched into church leadership by the prayers and parenting of his mother.

This should be an encouragement to all those single moms who are working so hard to grow your raise your sons and daughters to know and love Jesus but you are getting little or no help from the man in the house. Sometimes you wonder if all your prayers, Bible reading and sacrifice will pay off. Look to Eunice and Timothy for encouragement. God often blesses the spiritual investment moms make in their children, especially moms who make a huge sacrifice to teach the gospel to their children. Timothy was a product of his mother's hard work and the grace of Jesus.

### **Timothy was young.**

In 1 Timothy 4:12 Paul reminded Timothy to not let anyone look down on him because of his youth. In 2 Timothy 2:22 Paul told him to flee the evil desires of youth. The million dollar question is, How old was Timothy when this letter was written? How old was Paul when he called Timothy a youth? From what we can tell, Timothy first joined Paul on his missionary journeys when Timothy was in his late teens or early 20s. From that point, Timothy was with Paul for 13 or 14 years. At the time of this letter, Timothy was probably in his mid-30s or early 40s. This

means that in the ancient world, if you were in your 30s or 40s, you were still considered a youth. This made me feel much better because my knees, elbows, back and shoulders make me feel like an old man, but according to the Bible, I am still a young man at this stage of the game. I know for many of us that is a little extra boost we could use.

### **Timothy needed encouragement.**

In 2 Timothy 1:7, Paul reminded Timothy that God did not give us a spirit of timidity. Some translations say that God did not give us a spirit of fear. The picture we have is that Timothy was quiet. He blended into a crowd. He was not the life of the party. He was a quiet guy that could feel overwhelmed by his job, and he didn't like conflict. In short, he was a normal guy, like the rest of us. He wasn't a larger-than-life leader. He was like you and me.

### **Timothy struggled with health problems.**

He struggled with recurrent gastric problems. Perhaps he had Crohn's disease. Maybe he was lactose intolerant. I don't know. I do know in 1 Timothy 5:23 Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach and his frequent ailments. When we picture Timothy, picture him as young, quiet, bashful guy that is probably physically unimpressive. He was known for frequently grabbing his stomach and making a run to the bathroom. He was not the kind of person you would think of as a natural larger-than life leader. He was sick, skinny, quiet and too young for the job.

What did Timothy have going for him?

### Timothy was close to Paul.

Timothy was closely connected with Paul. This meant he knew the gospel from Paul. One thing most of us do not realize is how tightly connected Paul and Timothy became over their 14 years together. They traveled together to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:2), to Corinth (1 Cor 4:17) and to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). Timothy stayed with Paul when he was in prison in Rome (Phil 2:19). They collaborated together as Paul wrote six of his New Testament letters because Timothy is mentioned with Paul at the signature line at the end of them. They are 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philemon. Imagine being with Paul when he was writing letters that would end up in the New Testament and having your name put at the end of them. The great benefit of spending more than a decade with Paul every day was Timothy understood the gospel of Jesus Christ probably better than almost anyone else on planet. Timothy became almost a clone of Paul. To hear Timothy speak was to hear Paul speak. To ask Timothy a question was to ask Paul a question because Timothy learned the gospel directly from Paul for more than a decade.

One thing I found interesting is that while Timothy was an unassuming quiet guy, he was deeply committed to Jesus and to sharing the good news of Jesus with other people. He was willing to make great sacrifices to be able to share about Jesus. Before Paul took Timothy on his missionary journeys, the book of Acts tells us Timothy let Paul circumcise him so he wouldn't be an offense to the Jews when they worked with them.

When I sign up for a mission trip, I hesitate at the thought of going because I don't like the extra shots from the doctor. Timothy voluntarily underwent circumcision as an adult male before the invention of Novocain. Ouch!! He might not look like much of a leader but he was deeply committed to Jesus and to doing whatever he could to help others understand the good news of Jesus. He was willing to make great personal sacrifices in order to not be a stumbling block to sharing the good news of Jesus.

Now let's learn a bit about the church Timothy pastored.

### What do we need to know about Ephesus?

**Ephesus was an important city.**

Paul left timid Timothy in charge of the church of Ephesus. For most of us ancient Ephesus is an obscure place we know nothing about.



Understanding the city of Ephesus will be essential to understanding this letter. Here is the important back story. Ephesus was a port city for Asia Minor, which is modern day Turkey. Almost everything that went to the interior cities of Asia Minor came through the port of Ephesus. Almost all shipping from the cities of the interior going to Rome went through Ephesus. Ephesus became extremely wealthy from all of this shipping. It was the fourth largest city in the Roman empire with 250,000 people. In modern terms, it would be a city like Houston, Texas, the fourth largest city in America. All



of these people were packed into a city a bigger than Spencer but smaller than Clay County. This well-to-do city was also highly cultured. Some of its famous attractions were a huge library and an amphitheater.



It also had a famous house of prostitution that all the sailors looked forward to when they pulled into port and they were away from home. They had interesting signage in the city to get people to the brothel when they couldn't read. In the city there were occasional outlines of feet carved into the rock-covered street. If you followed the footsteps, can you guess where they led? You guessed it. The house of prostitution.

### **Ephesus was home of the Artemisium.**

One of the most prominent features in the city was the Artemisium. It housed the goddess Artemis. The Romans called her Diana. This temple was huge. It dominated the skyline in the city. It was considered one of the seven wonders of the world. It is 425-feet long by 200-feet wide and 60-feet tall. To put that in perspective, the average home run in Major League Baseball is 400 feet. This building is longer than a home run! The Artemisium wasn't cheap. It was made of solid marble. It was four times larger than the Parthenon in Athens. While most of it is destroyed today, many artistic re-creations show it as white because of that



marble. That is only partially true. At the time of Paul, the 127 marble columns on the outside of the Artemisium were covered in gold and studded with jewels. Remember that each one of them was 60 feet tall! The worship of Artemis and her temple was the city's identity in the world. People came from around the globe to see this temple and to worship Artemis. In addition, the Artemisium also served as a bank. It was considered a world bank.

Artemis was a multi-breasted female deity and it was said she helped with fertility and childbirth. Young girls were instituted into her cult at puberty. There was huge pressure on the women of Ephesus to dress like Artemis, have the same hairstyle as Artemis and provide worship to Artemis. For a woman to ignore worship of Artemis in Ephesus was to commit social suicide and condemn yourself to be an outsider in the city.



### **Ephesus was the center of witchcraft in the ancient world.**

In addition, the city was known as the center of sorcery and witchcraft in the ancient world. It was a spiritually dark place. The city had a huge publishing industry for books on magic, the occult, channeling, cursing, Wicca and the ancient version of Ouija boards. You name the demonic paraphernalia, they made it in Ephesus.

### **Ephesus had a large Jewish population.**

When Paul first came to Ephesus, he began teaching in the city synagogue. Unfortunately, he didn't have much result because many of the Jews

were resistant to the good news of Jesus. The city had a large Jewish population. Eventually Paul moved from preaching to the Jews to renting a lecture hall in the city and preaching to everyone else that was not a Jew. That is when the church in Ephesus was born.

**The simple preaching of the good news of Jesus transformed the city.**

The interesting part of this story is when Paul began preaching the gospel in this rich, pagan city that was steeped into the occult, the gospel took over the city. In Acts 19 we read about people coming to Christ, speaking in tongues and prophesying. Acts 19:11 says God did extraordinary miracles of healing in the city through Paul. Even Paul's used handkerchiefs were taken to sick people and they healed them. Let me tell you, when I leave a used tissue around our house nobody grabs it and uses it for healing.

So many people were turning to Jesus that the church began taking over the city. People were turning from their magic and sorcery to Jesus at amazing numbers. Acts 19 tells us about new Christians burning their magic books and the approximate value of the books being worth \$6 million. That is a lot of money to go up in smoke. That is only one book burning. I am sure many others followed. Eventually, a silversmith by the name of Demetrius, that made souvenirs for the temple of Artemis, stirred up a big controversy against Paul in the city because his business was suffering. When there are so many people in a city with a population of more than 250,000 turning from false religions to Jesus that Demetrius ,who makes souvenirs for Artemis, doesn't have enough customers to stay in business, you know the church is huge. It was taking over



the entire city. Demetrius stirred up such a riot in the city against Paul that the city was in danger of getting charged with rioting by the Roman Empire.

Ephesus was a mega church that makes our mega churches look small. It was a sending church from which many of the other churches in the interior of Asia Minor were planted. This was the church Paul sent timid Timothy to lead, the man with stomach cramps. You think your job is stressful, try leading a church filled with ex-satanists and former worshipers of Artemis!

We now know a little about Timothy the man and the church he pastored. Now let's learn about the problem he faced.

### **Spiritual wackos were infiltrating the church.**

Acts 20 tells us Paul's final words to the church in Ephesus before he left.

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.  
Acts 20:29–32 (ESV)

Just as Paul said, only four years after Acts 20, false teacher rose up in the church to lead it astray. These false teachers didn't come from outside the church but they came from inside the church. They were the elders, the teachers in the megachurch. They were pulling the baby Christians, who came from hard-core backgrounds, away from Jesus.

Paul wrote this letter to Timothy to tell him to stay in Ephesus and get rid of the nut jobs in the church who were telling people to focus things other than Jesus. In this letter Paul was adamant that Timothy get rid of any leader that insisted on drifting away from an all-consuming focus on Jesus.

Drifting away from Jesus leads to drifting away from the only way to know God; it leads to the destruction of the church and the destruction of lives forever in hell.

Paul was adamant that whatever happened in this church, Timothy must help people keep their eyes on Jesus. That challenge is not just for the church in ancient Ephesus but it is a word each of us needs to hear today. Next week, when we begin the book, we will see what was enticing the young Christians in Ephesus to drift away from Jesus and how we face similar temptations to drift away from Jesus today, just like they did in the past.

We will pick up next week with verse 1 as we see how a young frail pastor tried to lead a huge church filled with problems.



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