

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday January 25, 2023 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

Honoring 1 TIMOTHY GOD

HONORING GOD
“Why Is the Church Important?”
1 Timothy 3:14-16

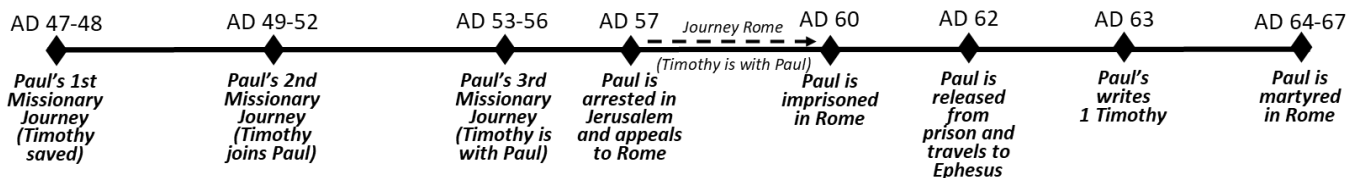
“¹⁴ These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; ¹⁵ but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. ¹⁶ And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.” - 1 Timothy 3:14-16 (NKJV)



Key Reminders for 1 Timothy:

- (1) **1 Timothy is a personal letter** – It is unlike most of Paul’s other letters that appear in the New Testament. Remember that most of Paul’s letters were written to churches and/or groups of churches, like Ephesians, Colossians, Galatians (a circular letter), etc. 1 Timothy was not a letter written to a group of Christians (churches). It is written to an individual and should be read and studied with that in mind. It’s personal in nature, rather than corporate. That doesn’t mean it’s not for the church today or applicable for the church and Christians. It is! It just means that in studying and understanding the letter for context purposes this must be kept in mind. It does have a bearing on interpretation of Paul’s letter.
- (2) **1 Timothy is written by Paul to Timothy, his apprentice in ministry** – As already - else’s mail, or better said we are privileged by design to get to read someone else’s mail. God wants us to for a reason. He wants us to apply the truths Paul spoke to Timothy to our own lives. Remember that the name Timothy means “one who honors God,” likewise our lives ought to honor God by how we conduct our lives, how we relate to believers in the church, how we serve and lead in the church, our behaviour, our spirit and attitudes, our words, our victory over the very things that defeat us and may keep us from being all that God has called us to be in Christ. Remember that Timothy was a young teenager from the town of Lysta when Paul first met him on his first missionary journey through Asia Minor. Paul led Timothy to the Lord, as well as the rest of his family... his mother and grandmother. When Paul returned to the area on his second missionary journey, apparently Timothy has grown in his faith to the point that Paul asked him to join him on his missionary journey. Timothy would remain a ministry companion to Paul for the rest of Paul’s life, as a faithful servant and fellow ministry.
- (3) **1 Timothy is known as a “Pastoral Epistle” (or letter)** – That makes this personal letter instructional especially for a pastor. There are three “Pastoral Epistles” in all in the New Testament; 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus, all written by Paul. They are “pastoral” in nature. In its simplest form, “pastoral” means pertaining to the pastor and or his responsibilities. The most common definitions of “pastoral” would be 1. Pastoral - of or pertaining to shepherds; hence, relating to rural life and scenes; as in a pastoral life (remember that pastors are often referred to the shepherd of the flock caring for their needs especially spiritual), 2. Pastoral – relating to the care of souls, or to the pastor of a church, as in, pastoral duties or a pastoral letter, 3. Pastoral – used to refer to the part of the work of teachers, preachers (pastors) and priests that involves giving help and advice about personal matters, or giving pastoral care through teaching, sermons, homilies, etc. The Pastoral Epistles are 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. All three are letters from an old man at the close of his ministry who is concerned for his successors in the pastorate. As such, the letters concern the things that would be crucial for the young pastors to understand—church organization and discipline, including such matters as the appointment of elders and deacons, the opposition of rebellious members or false teachers, and the maintenance of doctrinal purity.

- (4) **1 Timothy was written to address problems in the church at Ephesus and encourage their pastor, Timothy** – Timothy would eventually become the pastor of the church at Ephesus, likely around AD 62, following Paul’s release from prison. Paul’s release allowed him the opportunity to travel to Ephesus and eventually place Timothy in ministry at that church. Paul often sent Timothy to churches as his representative (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 16:10; Philippians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:2), and 1 Timothy finds him on another assignment, serving as pastor of the church at Ephesus (1 Thessalonians 1:3)... a troubled church with problems (Revelation 2:4, “... *you have left your first love.*”). Timothy find’s himself... perhaps at a young age, pastoring a very strategic, yet troubled church with a lot of problems.
- (5) **1 Timothy was likely written about AD 63** - The Bible’s silence on the ultimate fate of Paul has generated a great deal of debate in modern times. The book of Acts ends with Paul sitting in a Roman prison awaiting his hearing before the Roman emperor, a privilege of appeal that all Roman citizens like Paul possessed. However, the writing of the Pastoral Epistles clearly dates to a time after the events of Acts. So where was Paul when he wrote 1 Timothy? Paul had expected the Romans to release him from prison, something that likely happened near the end of AD 62 (Philippians 2:24). As previously stated, his release allowed him the opportunity to travel to Ephesus and eventually place Timothy in ministry at that church. Paul then went on to preach in Macedonia, where he heard reports of Timothy’s work at Ephesus that prompted him to write 1 Timothy, probably in AD 63.



First Timothy presents the most explicit and complete instructions for the church, for church leadership and organization in the entire Bible. This includes sections on appropriate conduct in worship gatherings, the qualifications of elders and deacons, and the proper order of church discipline... and give us a picture of why the church is so important, especially our passage in 1 Timothy 3:14-16. Look at it with me.

Now these last few verses in chapter 3 of 1 Timothy focus on the church... particularly the church at Ephesus to which Timothy was call to pastor, to help straighten out the problems. Let me remind you that this was an important, strategic and much loved church. I think it is fitting to be reminded of some important and much loved facts about this church at Ephesus that Timothy was pastoring at this time.

5 things you need to know about the church at Ephesus: (*the church Timothy was pastoring when Paul write this letter to him*)

- (1) **It was a church Paul loved deeply** - Many scholars argue—and I’m inclined to agree—that the letter to the Ephesians was written as a circular letter intended to be circulated to

all the churches in the region of Ephesus. There's not much in the way of personal greetings or notes in the letter, unlike some of Paul's other letters. Still, I think Paul's deep love for this congregation comes through. Paul spent more time in Ephesus than he did in any other city, approximately three years. Priscilla and Aquilla, two of Paul's closest companions, helped him start the church. I think Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:17-35 is one of the most touching and moving things Paul writes, and shows the great love he had for this congregation. Paul knew this church. He had spent time with them. He loved them. And his love for them shows in sending Timothy to them to help them navigate the difficult waters and problems they were having as a church at a time when Paul was not available to come be with them due to his imprisonment. Paul loved them! ***NOTE: No matter how bad it get in the church, Jesus loves His church and His people and He will provide what they need to be all He has called them to be.***

- (2) **It was a diverse congregation** - Only God could take a group of Jews, idol worshippers, sorcerers, masters, slaves, and rulers of the city and combine them into one church. Our God delights in bringing unity from diversity, and he did it marvelously in Ephesus. We know that Paul started his ministry in Ephesus as he often did, by first seeking out any known believers and then preaching in the synagogue till he got kicked out (Acts 19:8-9). Both Jews and Gentiles heard the word of the Lord (17:10). Some abandoned their magic arts to pursue Christ (17:19). Many abandoned their idols (17:24-26). Masters and slaves worshipped together (Eph. 5:5-9) and Paul counted some of the leaders of the city among his friends (Acts 19:31). It was to this congregation that Paul wrote so powerfully about unity in the Spirit and the power of knowing who we are in Christ. But with this kind of diversity is it any wonder that things got... well, difficult and tenuous at times... that some forms of confusion and false ideologies and teaching could find their way. No wonder the church at Ephesus, that Timothy was not pastoring, had some struggles.
- (3) **It was a church birthed out of a powerful move of God** - It's been said that wherever Paul went he started either a revival or a riot. In Ephesus he started both. The Spirit was on Paul so strongly during his stay in Ephesus that people even carried his discarded handkerchiefs or aprons to the sick and they were healed. Some tried to imitate him. Seven sons of a Jewish priest tried to cast out a demon in the name of "Jesus who Paul preaches." The demon-possessed man overpowered them and beat them until all seven men fled the house wounded and naked. That one got the whole city talking (Acts 19:15-17). It didn't stop there. A group of sorcerers who had accepted Christ brought their magic books and publicly burned them. So many people were accepting Christ that the tradesmen who made silver idols of Artemis began to fear that their trade would be affected. They sparked a riot, claiming that "this Paul" was bringing so many people to Jesus that the great goddess Artemis might be regarded as worthless (Acts 19:23-29). That's like a revival sweeping Las Vegas until the casino owners start worrying they're going to have to shut down. The church at Ephesus didn't wonder what would happen if God really moved. They had witnessed it firsthand.

- (4) **It was a church acquainted with spiritual warfare** - It's no accident that Ephesians is the book that gives us Paul's beautiful description of the armor of God. The church at Ephesus was birthed in the midst of a spiritual battle. The Greco-Roman world boasted a plurality of religions, but Ephesus took it to a whole new level. Ephesus was a city proud of their religious plurality and religious tolerance. Though it was home to the Artemis cult, at least 50 other gods were worshipped in Ephesus. This included Greek gods like Zeus and Athena as well as Egyptian deities like Isis and Sarapis. Ephesus was also a center for Emperor worship—interesting considering that one of the major themes of Ephesians is that Jesus is Lord. ***The central religious figure of the city of Ephesus was Artemis.*** The ancients considered the temple to Artemis one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Life in Ephesus revolved around the worship of Artemis. A month of the year was named after Artemis and the city held annual games in her honor. The Ephesians believed their relationship to Artemis was governed by a covenant relationship between the city and the goddess. No wonder people got upset when they believed this new religion was mocking the goddess. When someone starts suggesting your patron saint is only an idol made by human hands, it tends to get folks riled up. With all that mishmash of sorcery and idol worship going on, Satan surely had a strong foothold in Ephesus. The church needed to know the authority and power that they had in Christ so that they could claim their rightful victory (Ephesians 6:10-17). So do we.
- (5) **The church at Ephesus was strategic for the growth and advancement of the New Testament church and the gospel** – Ephesus was called the “Light of Asia.” It was a port city and all ancient commerce and trade passed through Ephesus. The most important road for travel, trade and commerce passed through Ephesus and was even called “Ephesian Way.” The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ would be spread on this important route and would be able to advance to places unknown, spreading further and further throughout the ancient world. This city was important and this church was important. Some of the most important figures would spend time in Ephesus and actually call it home. We know Paul spent more time in Ephesus than anywhere else... at least three years. After Paul's death, perhaps a few years later, in all probability very soon after the beginning of the Jewish war, tradition says that the city became the home of the Apostle John. This may or may not be true, but circumstances make it possible, if not probable. He was supposed to have taken Mary, the mother of Jesus, there to live (cf. John 19:26-27). This picture is of a church faithfully serving their Lord and producing the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:21-23; John 15:1-3). It was probably during the reign of Domitian (81-96 A.D.) that John was banished to Patmos. He was released and died during the reign of Trajan according to Irenaeus (an early church historian). Tradition relates that at a very old age John, too feeble to walk, would be carried into this church's assembly and would admonish the members, little children, love one another. During this period the Lord gives His assessment of the Ephesian church through the apostle John (Revelation 2:1-7). He compliments them on their works, but has found a disease in the plant. They have left their first love (Revelation 2:4). He commands immediate action – repent, remember, repeat (the first works) (Revelation 2:5).

With that bit of a background for the church at Ephesus, is it any wonder that the church at Ephesus had perhaps lost its vision and purpose. Why was the church important? Why are we here? What sort of difference can we make in this world in which we find ourselves? And what is the purpose of the church that we must keep as the main thing and focus? These were some things pressing in not only on Timothy but the church at Ephesus (and us today)

“¹⁴ These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; ¹⁵ but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. ¹⁶ And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.” -1 Timothy 3:14-16 (NKJV)

There is Paul’s words. So let’s ask the question, “Why is the church so important?”

WHAT AMERICA SAYS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH

A recent survey and article by the Barna Research Group, entitled, “Americans Divided on the Importance of Church,” makes this statement, “What, if anything, helps Americans grow in their faith? When Barna Group asked, people offered a variety of answers—prayer, family or friends, reading the Bible, having children—but church did not even crack the top-10 list. Although church involvement was once a cornerstone of American life, U.S. adults today are evenly divided on the importance of attending church. While half (49%) say it is “somewhat” or “very” important, the other 51% say it is “not too” or “not at all” important. The divide between the religiously active and those resistant to churchgoing impacts American culture, morality, politics and religion.” – Barna Research

How do you respond?

- *What do you think about the statement Barna makes about how the church didn’t not even crack the top 10 things that help American’s grow in their faith?*
- *What does this say about the church today?*
- *Why might many American’s fail to name the church as impactful for their faith and growing in it?*
- *In what ways was the church and church involvement “a cornerstone of American life”?*
- *What affect do you think this had on American life in general when the church was more of a “cornerstone of American life”?*
- *What affect does it have for the church to no longer be a “cornerstone” for American life?*
- *Why do you think many today have become more inactive and resistant to church going?*

➤ *How does this impact American culture? Cite examples of how it impacts American culture (1) morally, (2) politically, (3) religiously?*

I read an article this week that I found quite troubling and may be somewhat informative on why the church, church attendance/involvement, and religious faith is so important. The headline caught my attention. It said, “Middle-Aged White Suicide, Alcohol Abuse Linked to Loss of Religion.” The first line of the article said this, “The rise of ‘deaths of despair’ among middle-aged white Americans may be linked to the decline in religious practice, according to new research.” -Breitbart News and National Bureau of Economic Research

Interesting? Huh?

Now let me ask the question we want to ask this evening in our study of 1 Timothy as we finish up this third chapter in Paul’s letter... “Why is the church so important?” What are your thoughts: _____

Let me ask it a different way, maybe a restatement of the question, “What is God’s mission of the church do you think? _____

- For some the church is a social network—a place to meet like-minded people.
- For others, it’s a place to help raise their children
- For others, it is a place for social justice—helping the poor, the trafficked, and the unborn
- How we view something affects how we treat it

What is God’s view of the church and, therefore, God’s mission for it? That’s what we ought to be asking...

In 1 Timothy, Paul writes a letter about God’s expectations for church conduct. In fact, in 1 Timothy 3:15, he gives three metaphors of the church—three ways God views it.

3 Metaphors of Why the Church is Important and God’s Mission for the Church:

(1) The church functions as God’s family

(2) The church functions as an assembly of the Living God

(3) The church functions as the pillar and foundation of the truth

The church is a family, the assembly of God, and the support (pillar) and bulwark (foundation) of the truth.

What do these metaphors teach us about God's mission for the church? How can we, as individuals and congregations, help the "Church" fulfill God's directives?

Big Question: What does Paul's three metaphors teach us about God's mission and purpose for the church? About what the church is important?

Let's look at them individually and think about what Paul was telling Timothy, and by implication, what God's Word though Paul is telling us...

THE CHURCH SHOULD FUNCTION AS GOD'S FAMILY

Notice again, Paul's words in verses 14-15, *"¹⁴ These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; ¹⁵ but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."*

The word "house" (of God) or "household" (in some translations) refers to a building. However, most likely this is metaphorical language for a family or household (family) of faith since it is translated this way three times in verses 4, 5, and 12.

Paul said this in Ephesians 3:14-15, *"¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,"*

The church is God's family. It is full of brothers, sisters, mothers, and fathers (cf. Matt 12:48-49). In fact, even though Christ is our God, he is called our brother in Romans 8:29... It says, *"²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."* The NIV says it, *"²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters."*

Therefore, the reality that the church is God's family should affect how we treat each other.

Application Question: How should we apply the fact that we are God's family?

Because we are God's family...

(1) Because the church is God's family, we should show familial love to each other- How do we show/express "familial love" in the church? What dynamic in a family is often missing in the church? (patience, grace, endurance... family is always family, blood is thicker than water, we don't stop being family) What about this one, the concept of church hopping is not consistent with the idea of the New Testament church as laid out in God's Word... if you get fed up with your family you don't leave and say I'm going to go join another, better family.

Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 5:1-2 with this picture in mind of the church as a family, *“Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, ² older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity.”* Paul taught Timothy to treat older men and women with respect, as we would our parents. We must encourage and challenge younger men as brothers. We must guard younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

This should specifically be applied to how people treat the opposite sex in a dating or courting relationship. They should be treated as natural brothers or sisters with absolute purity. This means if a guy wouldn't do it with his natural sister, he shouldn't do it with his spiritual sister. Paul establishes strict sexual boundaries when he says, “complete purity.” If couples handle their pre-marriage relationships this way, they do well.

Are you showing familial love to the members of your church?

- This also implies openly sharing problems and hardships.
- It means bearing the burdens of others.
- It means working hard to reconcile when conflicts arise.
- It means always seeking the best for others, as one would with a mother, father, brother, sister, son, or daughter.
- In fact, it is a good practice to refer to each other with familial terms, as was common in the New Testament.
- Paul called Timothy his son in the faith (1 Tim 1:2).
- He writes to congregations calling them brothers (Rom 12:1).

Since, we are family, we should display familial love towards one another.

(2) Because the church is God's family, we should prioritize one another – *What do you think it means to “prioritize” the family of God? How may we better prioritize the family of God? Why would this be particularly important for the church at Ephesus? What about for us?*

Paul write in Galatians 6:10 , *“¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”* Here in this text, Paul calls for believers to prioritize the body of Christ over others.

In a natural family, the members feel a responsibility to participate in family gatherings such as dinners, outings, or vacations. This should be true with church family as well. If they are gathering for Sunday worship, mid-week Bible study, prayer, a retreat, a mission trip, etc., members should feel a responsibility to be involved. Church must be our priority.

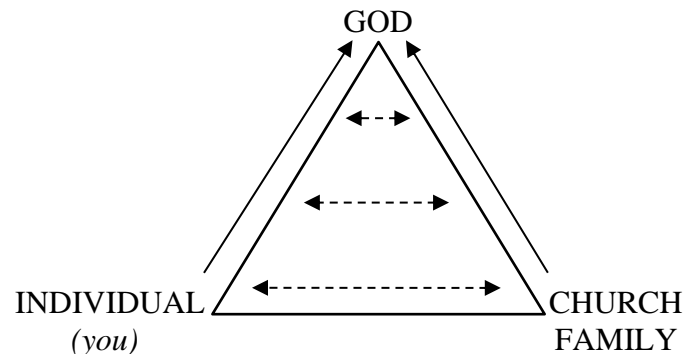
Sadly, for many, church is not a priority. It is something occasionally attended with little to no commitment. It is family in name only.

Is the church and its members your priority? This priority is particularly revealed when there are opportunities to serve. Paul says that we should do good to all, but especially to the family of believers. Is there a need? Is someone struggling physically, emotionally, or financially? Let us take on that burden, as we would with our natural family.

(3) Because the church is God’s family, we gain closer fellowship by knowing God more

- In 1 John 1:3, John said, *“³That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”* The apostles taught of their experience with Christ so that others might have fellowship with them and God. The implication of this is that the more we know God, the more we have genuine fellowship with one another.

Our relationships with God and the church are like a triangle; God is at the top and the individual and other church members are on opposite sides. The closer we get to God, the closer we get to one another, and consequently, the more fellowship we have with the body of Christ.



Therefore, if we are growing in Christ—knowing him and his Word more—we will naturally grow in fellowship with one another. This is why so many in the church never really get involved or get to know people in the church; it’s because they are not growing spiritually. Knowing God naturally leads to knowing and being intimate with his family. Essentially...

- Our horizontal relationships reflect our vertical relationship
- Our vertical relationship reflects our horizontal relationships

If we are in discord with others, we can be sure we are in discord with God. Christ said if we don’t forgive one another, God will not forgive us (Matt 6:15), and if we forgive others, God will forgive us (Matt 6:14). Our horizontal reflects our vertical.

- What do your relationships with others say about your relationship with God?
- Are you growing in fellowship with God and therefore in fellowship with others?
- This is an important principle for friendships, marriages, and church relationships.
- The more we know God, the more fellowship we will have with one another.

***Application Question:* How have you experienced your horizontal relationships reflecting your vertical relationship and vice versa? Are there any relationships God is calling you to make right so you can be closer to him (Matt 5:23-24)?**

THE CHURCH SHOULD FUNCTION AS THE ASSEMBLY OF THE LIVING GOD

Let's return to Paul's words in verses 14-15... notice it again, "¹⁴ *These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; ¹⁵ but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*" Next, notice that Paul calls believers the "church of the living God."

"Church" or "assembly" was actually "a non-religious word for a group of people called together for a select purpose."¹ It actually means "those called out"² or "the called out ones" and was used of political assemblies (cf. Acts 19:29, 32). Believers are called together for the select purpose of worshiping and obeying the living God.

"Living God" was a commonly used phrase in the Old Testament that emphasized the difference between the pagan religions and Judaism. David said this about Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:26, "For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he defies the armies of the living God?" (1 Sam 17:26). The Jews worshiped the living God, while the other nations worshiped dead idols. This was certainly true in Timothy's context, where the pagans in Ephesus worshiped the goddess Diana. In Ephesus, a tiny congregation worshiped the living God while everybody else worshiped dead idols.

***Application Question:* What applications can we take from the fact that believers are the assembly of the living God?**

Being the assembly of the living God...

(1) Being the assembly of the living God, reminds us that God meets with the church in a special way when believers gather together - Consider the following verses...

3 verses that reminds us

¹ Guzik, D. (2013). *1 Timothy* (1 Ti 3:14–15). Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 223). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

[1] **Matthew 18:20** – *“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”*

[2] **Psalm 22:3** – *“But You are holy, O You who inhabits the praises of Your people.”*

[3] **1 Corinthians 3:16** – *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”*

When the church gathers together, God meets with them.

Martin Luther said, “At home in my own house there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church when the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart and it breaks its way through.”³ *What is Luther saying?*

John Stott said, “When the members of the congregation are scattered during most of the week it is difficult to remain aware of this reality. But when we come together as the church (ekklēsia, ‘assembly’) of the living God, every aspect of our common life is enriched by the knowledge of his presence in our midst. In our worship we bow down before the living God. Through the reading and exposition of his Word we hear his voice addressing us. We meet him at his table, when he makes himself known to us through the breaking of bread. In our fellowship we love each other as he has loved us. And our witness becomes bolder and more urgent. Indeed, unbelievers coming in may confess that ‘God is really among you’”.⁴

(2) Being the assembly of the living God, reminds us of our calling to be holy - It is interesting to consider the applications of God dwelling among Israel in the OT. Because God dwelled among them (Ex 29:45), they were constantly reminded to be holy, even in how they used the bathroom. Consider **Deuteronomy 23:12-14**, ¹² *“Also you shall have a place outside the camp, where you may go out; ¹³ and you shall have an implement among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover your refuse. ¹⁴ For the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you.”* It is no different for us. Just as God moved about Israel’s camp in the Old Testament, he moves among us when we gather to worship. We must remember that we are God’s temple—the assembly of the living God who is among us. Therefore, let us get rid of sin and everything that might dishonor him, so that he won’t remove his blessing from us (cf. 2 Cor 6:14-7:1). Is there discord in our relationships? Let us seek unity. Is there bitterness in our hearts? Let us repent and give thanks. Our God is among us in worship. Our God is a holy God, and therefore, we must be holy and

³ Hughes, R. K., & Chapell, B. (2000). *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: to guard the deposit* (p. 91). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

⁴ Stott, J. R. W. (1996). *Guard the truth: the message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (pp. 104–105). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

reverent (cf. 1 Peter 1:16). Remember Jesus words in his Sermon on the Mount concerning worship in Matthew 5:23-24, “²³ Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” **What is He telling us about our worship?**

- (3) Being the assembly of the living God, reminds us of our need to constantly avail ourselves to corporate worship** - Hebrews 10:24-25 says, “²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” If God is really among us, how much more should we seek to gather together, especially as the day of his return approaches. We should not neglect the assembly but constantly gather together to spur one another towards love and good deeds.

We are the assembly of the living God. Those who have forgotten this show up to worship without a sense of reverence or neglect it all together... they have forgotten their calling. God called them out of the world so he could meet with them in a special way in the public gathering. If we don't know God's mission, we won't fulfill it.

Application Question: What are your thoughts and feelings about the reality of the living God being among us in corporate worship? How would this affect individual believers if they really had a concept of this?

THE CHURCH SHOULD FUNCTION AS THE PILLAR AND FOUNDATION OF THE TRUTH

“¹⁴ These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; ¹⁵ but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. ¹⁶ And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.” -1 Timothy 3:14-16 (NKJV)

2 Interpretation Questions:

- (1) Interpretation Question:** What does Paul mean by calling the church **the pillar of the truth**? - Finally, Paul calls the church the “pillar and ground (foundation) of the truth.” What does he mean by this? We will first consider what a pillar is.

*Pillars served three primary functions in those days:
[1] They supported statues and roofs.*

[2] *They thrusted them high so all could see.*⁵

[3] *They were set up in marketplaces so notices could be published on them.*⁶

The Ephesians would relate to this since the Temple of Diana had over 127 pillars.⁷ However, they also would be challenged since being a pillar of the truth is a function of the church.

Think about this... the church is not primarily to be seen but to support, lift up, and publish the truth so that all can see and know.

Philippians 2:14-16 says, *“¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”*

It can also be translated *“hold out”* the word of life (KJV). This is the job of the church. We are called to hold forth the truth in a day when people don’t want truth—a day when people are content to follow the lies of the enemy.

(2) Interpretation Question: What does Paul mean by calling the church the (ground) foundation of the truth? - How is the church the foundation of the truth? Foundations hold buildings firm so they don’t collapse, especially when storms come. In a similar way, the church holds the truth firmly—keeping it from decay or being lost. Paul calling the church the foundation of the truth is particularly interesting, since he calls the truth the foundation of the church in Ephesians 2:19-22... notice his words here, *“¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”* The church is built on the doctrinal foundation of the apostles and prophets. How can these both be true? John Stott gives an apt answer to this question. He says, *“When Paul taught that the truth is the foundation of the church,⁷⁵ he was referring to the church’s life and health: the church rests on the truth, depends on it, cannot exist without it. But when he taught that the church is the foundation of the truth (3:15), he was referring to the church’s mission: the church is called to serve the truth, to hold it fast and make it known. So then,*

⁵ Stott, J. R. W. (1996). *Guard the truth: the message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (p. 105). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁶ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 2090). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (p. 135). Chicago: Moody Press.

the church and the truth need each other. The church depends on the truth for its existence; the truth depends on the church for its defence and proclamation.⁸

Think about this... How can churches and individual Christians fulfill God's call to be the pillar and foundation of the truth?

How can the church and Christians be the pillar and foundation for the truth?:

- (1) **Churches and Christians must believe God's Word** - This should not need to be said, but sadly, it does. Many Christians don't believe the Bible anymore. This is so, so troubling to me... from a July 2022 Gallup Survey, "A record-high of 80% of Americans now believe the Bible is not the literal word of God, according to a new survey from Gallup. Among those who identify as Christians, 42% say the Bible is not the inspired word of God, while 25% of Christians still say it should be interpreted literally, another 16% of Christians say it is simply an ancient book of fables and legends." They don't believe what it teaches about creation, salvation, men's and women's roles, or eternity. We are raising a generation of Christians that don't believe the Bible. Of those who do, many pick and choose what to believe. Paul said this in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "¹⁶All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Notice, he didn't say "SOME" Scripture but "ALL" Scripture. Jesus said this in Matthew 4:4, "*Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.*" Again, it's not "SOME" words but "EVERY" word. If the church is going to be the pillar and foundation of the truth, we must believe every Word of Scripture and not just some of it. Do you believe God's Word?
- (2) **Churches and Christians must study God's Word** – 2 Timothy 2:15 says, "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" One of the reasons many Christians have wrong doctrine is because they don't work hard at studying Scripture. They simply accept what their parents and pastors told them, instead of affirming it themselves. Perhaps you've heard this before, but we need to be like the Bereans in Scripture. The Bereans were called noble because they tested Paul's teaching to see if it was true. Acts 17:11 says of the Bereans, "¹¹ Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." If we don't diligently study Scripture, instead of upholding truth, we will uphold, live by, and possibly teach false doctrine and therefore won't be approved by God (cf. Matt 5:19, 2 Tim 2:15).
- (3) **Churches and Christians must live God's Word** – James 1:22 says, "*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*" In other words, live out what it says. If the church is going to be the pillar and foundation of the truth, it

⁸ Stott, J. R. W. (1996). *Guard the truth: the message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (pp. 105–106). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

must not only have orthodoxy but orthopraxy. It must hold to sound doctrine and live it out. Sadly, many people are pushed away from God, the church, and the truth because so many Christians don't practice what they preach. When living in sin, instead of affirming the truth, we discredit it. 1 Timothy 4:16 says, *"¹⁶ Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."* Are you affirming the truth by practicing it?

(4) Churches and Christians must teach God's Word - Matthew 28:19-20 says, *"¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Each one of us is called to make disciples by teaching them everything Christ commanded, which includes all of Scripture. When Christians cease to teach the Word of God because it is unpopular, because people don't want to hear it, or for fear of consequences, they fail to be pillars and foundations of truth. Sadly, that is exactly what the church is doing today. They hide the lamp of God's Word and condemn themselves and the world in the process (cf. Matt 5:15). When this happens, those seeking for truth can't find it in the world or in the church. Will you teach the truth—publishing it for all to see? As in all periods of history, the truth is under attack today. The foundations of society are crumbling because most people no longer believe in objective truth. Therefore, one can choose whatever gender they want to be, they can redefine marriage, they can murder innocents, and anyone who proclaims absolute truth is scorned. Here is a time that the church must again hold forth the truth and publish it for all to see, even though it's unpopular. We must proclaim the truth in season and out of season (2 Tim 4:2)—when it's popular and when it's not. Will you proclaim it?

***Interpretation Question:* Why does Paul talk about the mystery of godliness after referring to the church as the pillar and foundation of the truth in verse 16?**

After talking about the church's duty to the truth, Paul describes the primary content of that truth in verse 16. He says, *"¹⁶ And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory."*

It seems that Paul is quoting an early church hymn with six stanzas.⁹ The hymn is Christological and gospel-centered. Christ is the truth that the church must teach, and he is the mystery from which true godliness springs.

***Observation Question:* What are the six parts of the hymn and what do they refer to?**

⁹ Hughes, R. K., & Chapell, B. (2000). *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: to guard the deposit* (p. 93). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

6 Parts to the Christological Hymn of 1 Timothy 3:16:

1. **He appeared in the flesh refers to Christ's incarnation** - He was not created—he appeared. He pre-existed as God the Son. However, he became human so he could die for humans and save them from their sins.
2. **He was vindicated by the Spirit** - This refers to how the Holy Spirit declared him righteous throughout his life. The Spirit empowered Christ to live a holy life. He declared him righteous at his baptism, as he descended upon him as a dove (Matt 3:16-17). He declared him the righteous Son of God through many miracles throughout his life (John 14:11). And ultimately, he declared him righteous through the resurrection. Romans 1:4 says, “who was appointed the Son-of-God-in-power according to the Holy Spirit by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.” The Spirit declared Christ righteous to all through the resurrection—death could not hold him because he was perfect. If Christ had sin, he would not have been resurrected. Finally, those today who accept Christ, do so through the work of the Holy Spirit. He convicts the world of sin and righteousness (John 16:8). He affirms the perfect worthiness of the Lamb.
3. **He was seen by angels** - This refers to their special interest and ministry to Christ throughout his life. They announced his coming to Mary and Joseph. They announced his birth to shepherds. They strengthened him while he fasted in the wilderness and during his temptation right before his death. They appeared at his tomb during the resurrection, and they watched him ascend into the heavens.
4. **He was preached among the nations** - This refers to the apostolic and missionary ministry right after his ascension. The gospel was proclaimed in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8).
5. **He was believed on in the world** - This refers to his acceptance. After Christ's ascension, there were only 120 followers praying in an upper room waiting for the Holy Spirit. However, after the Spirit came, Peter preached the gospel and 3,000 were saved and soon after thousands more. Since then, the gospel has been accepted by many throughout the world.
6. **He was taken up to glory** - This seems to refer to the ascension, as he ascended to the right hand of the Father. However, some believe this might refer to Christ's second coming in glory—allowing the hymn to continue chronologically.¹⁰ Either way, Christ's ascension in glory parallels his coming in glory.

This is the historical truth that the church must never lose and proclaim to all. Christ—the Son of God—was a real historical person. He was empowered by the Holy Spirit from birth. He lived a perfect life and died for the sins of the world, so that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). Paul said this in **1 Corinthians 2:1-2, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.² For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”** He must be the truth that the church proclaims

¹⁰ Stott, J. R. W. (1996). *Guard the truth: the message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (p. 107). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

and protects. Are you still proclaiming Christ? Are you proclaiming him through your life? That is the mission of the church.

Application Question: In what ways is truth being attacked by governments and education systems throughout the world? How can the church remain faithful in cultures who hate truth? In what specific ways is God challenging you to stand firm as a pillar and foundation to the truth?

CONCLUSION

If we don't know the purpose of something, it is prone to abuse. The church is God's called out ones. He assembled the church with a plan—a mission—and it is good for us to consider his directives repeatedly so that we don't neglect or forget them. Are you helping the church fulfill its mission?

Some questions to consider that indicated you understand why the church exists:

- 1. Do you treat the members of the church as family?**
- 2. Do you still have a sense of reverence for God's presence when gathering with the church?**
- 3. Are you striving to hold firm to the truth and publish it to all who will listen?**