

We hope you enjoy these sample pages. For ordering information, visit Liguori.org.

LIGUORI CATHOLIC BIBLE STUDY



Pastoral Letters *and* The Letter *to the* Hebrews

1 AND 2 TIMOTHY, TITUS, HEBREWS

WILLIAM A. ANDERSON, DMIN, PHD



Liguori
LIGUORI, MISSOURI

Imprimi Potest:
Harry Grile, CSsR, Provincial
Denver Province, The Redemptorists

Printed with Ecclesiastical Permission and Approved for Private or Instructional Use

Nihil Obstat: Rev. Msgr. Kevin Michael Quirk, JCD, JV
Censor Librorum
Imprimatur: +Michael J. Bransfield
Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston [West Virginia]

July 15, 2013

Published by Liguori Publications
Liguori, Missouri 63057

To order, call 800-325-9521
www.liguori.org

Copyright © 2014 William A. Anderson

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior written permission of Liguori Publications.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Anderson, William Angor, 1937-

Pastoral letters : 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews / William A. Anderson, DMin, PhD.—First Edition.

pages cm

ISBN 978-0-7648-2128-8

1. Bible. Pastoral letters—Study and teaching. 2. Bible. Hebrews—Study and teaching. 3. Church group work. 4. Catholic Church—Doctrines. I. Title.

BS2735.55.A53 2014

227'.830071—dc23

2014001721

p ISBN 978-0-7648-2128-8

e ISBN 978-0-7648-6925-9

Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible*, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C., and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the *New American Bible* may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Liguori Publications, a nonprofit corporation, is an apostolate of The Redemptorists. To learn more about The Redemptorists, visit Redemptorists.com.

Printed in the United States of America
18 17 16 15 14 / 5 4 3 2 1
First Edition



Contents

Dedication 5

Acknowledgments 7

Introduction to Liguori Catholic Bible Study 9

Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading) 11

How to Use This Bible-Study Companion 14

A Process for Sacred Reading 15

Group-Study Formats 16

Introduction: Pastoral Letters and The Letter to the Hebrews 19

Pastoral Letters: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus 19

The Letter to the Hebrews 24

Lesson 1 Authentic Teaching 29

Group Study (1 Timothy 1—2) 30

Lesson 2 Proper Conduct 40

Part 1: Group Study (1 Timothy 3—4) 41

Part 2: Individual Study (1 Timothy 5—6) 47

Lesson 3 Pastoral Concerns and Christian Behavior 56

Part 1: Group Study (2 Timothy 1—2) 57

Part 2: Individual Study (2 Timothy 3—4) 66

NOTE: The length of each Bible section varies. Group leaders should combine sections as needed to fit the number of sessions in their program.

Lesson 4 Living Christian Life 73

Part 1: Group Study (Titus 1—2) 74

Part 2: Individual Study (Titus 3) 79

Lesson 5 Jesus, Compassionate High Priest 83

Part 1: Group Study (Hebrews 1—2) 84

Part 2: Individual Study (Hebrews 3—6) 92

Lesson 6 Jesus, A Priest Forever 102

Part 1: Group Study (Hebrews 7—8) 103

Part 2: Individual Studies (Hebrews 9—13) 108

About the Author 127



Introduction to *Liguori Catholic Bible Study*

READING THE BIBLE can be daunting. It's a complex book, and many a person of goodwill has tried to read the Bible and ended up putting it down in utter confusion. It helps to have a companion, and *Liguori Catholic Bible Study* is a solid one. Over the course of this series, you'll learn about biblical messages, themes, personalities, and events and understand how the books of the Bible rose out of the need to address new situations.

Across the centuries, people of faith have asked, "Where is God in this moment?" Millions of Catholics look to the Bible for encouragement in their journey of faith. Wisdom teaches us not to undertake Bible study alone, disconnected from the Church that was given Scripture to share and treasure. When used as a source of prayer and thoughtful reflection, the Bible comes alive.

Your choice of a Bible-study program should be dictated by what you want to get out of it. One goal of *Liguori Catholic Bible Study* is to give readers greater familiarity with the Bible's structure, themes, personalities, and message. But that's not enough. This program will also teach you to use Scripture in your prayer. God's message is as compelling and urgent today as ever, but we get only part of the message when it's memorized and stuck in our head. It's meant for the entire person—physical, emotional, and spiritual.

We're baptized into life with Christ, and we're called to live more fully with Christ today as we practice the values of justice, peace, forgiveness, and community. God's new covenant was written on the hearts of the people of Israel; we, their spiritual descendants, are loved that intimately

by God today. *Liguori Catholic Bible Study* will draw you closer to God, in whose image and likeness we are fashioned.

Group and Individual Study

The *Liguori Catholic Bible Study* series is intended for group and individual study and prayer. This series gives you the tools to start a study group. Gathering two or three people in a home or announcing the meeting of a Bible-study group in a parish or community can bring surprising results. Each lesson in this series contains a section to help groups study, reflect, pray, and share biblical reflections. Each lesson, except the first, also has a second section for individual study.

Many people who want to learn more about the Bible don't know where to begin. This series gives them a place to start and helps them continue until they're familiar with all the books of the Bible.

Bible study can be a lifelong project, always enriching those who wish to be faithful to God's Word. When people complete a study of the whole Bible, they can begin again, making new discoveries with each new adventure into the Word of God.



Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading)

BIBLE STUDY isn't just a matter of gaining intellectual knowledge of the Bible; it's also about gaining a greater understanding of God's love and concern for creation. The purpose of reading and knowing the Bible is to enrich our relationship with God. God loves us and gave us the Bible to illustrate that love. In his April 12, 2013, address before the Pontifical Biblical Commission, Pope Francis stressed that "the Church's life and mission are founded on the word of God which is the soul of theology and at the same time inspires the whole of Christian life."

The Meaning of *Lectio Divina*

Lectio divina is a Latin expression that means "divine or sacred reading." The process for *lectio divina* consists of Scripture readings, reflection, and prayer. Many clergy, religious, and laity use *lectio divina* in their daily spiritual reading to develop a closer and more loving relationship with God. Learning about Scripture has as its purpose the living of its message, which demands a period of reflection on the Scripture passages.

Prayer and *Lectio Divina*

Prayer is a necessary element for the practice of *lectio divina*. The entire process of reading and reflecting is a prayer. It's not merely an intellectual pursuit; it's also a spiritual one. Page 18 includes an Opening Prayer for gathering one's thoughts before moving on to the passages in each section. This prayer may be used privately or in a group. For those who use the book

for daily spiritual reading, the prayer for each section may be repeated each day. Some may wish to keep a journal of each day's meditation.

Pondering the Word of God

Lectio divina is the ancient Christian spiritual practice of reading the holy Scriptures with intentionality and devotion. This practice helps Christians center themselves and descend to the level of the heart to enter an inner quiet space, finding God.

This sacred reading is distinct from reading for knowledge or information, and it's more than the pious practice of spiritual reading. It is the practice of opening ourselves to the action and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As we intentionally focus on and become present to the inner meaning of the Scripture passage, the Holy Spirit enlightens our minds and hearts. We come to the text willing to be influenced by a deeper meaning that lies within the words and thoughts we ponder.

In this space, we open ourselves to be challenged and changed by the inner meaning we experience. We approach the text in a spirit of faith and obedience as a disciple ready to be taught by the Holy Spirit. As we savor the sacred text, we let go of our usual control of how we expect God to act in our lives and surrender our hearts and consciences to the flow of the divine (*divina*) through the reading (*lectio*).

The fundamental principle of *lectio divina* leads us to understand the profound mystery of the Incarnation, "The Word became flesh," not only in history but also within us.

Praying *Lectio* Today

Before you begin, relax your body and maintain a posture of prayer (back straight, eyes shut, feet flat on the floor). Then practice these four simple actions:

1. Read a passage from Scripture or the daily Mass readings. This is known as *lectio*. (If the Word of God is read aloud, the hearers listen attentively.)
2. Pray the selected passage with attention as you listen for a specific meaning that comes to mind. Once again, the reading is listened to or silently read and reflected or meditated on. This is known as *meditatio*.
3. The exercise becomes active. Pick a word, sentence, or idea that surfaces from your consideration of the chosen text. Does the reading remind you of a person, place, or experience? If so, pray about it. Compose your thoughts and reflection into a simple word or phrase. This prayer-thought will help you remove distractions during the *lectio*. This exercise is called *oratio*.
4. In silence, with your eyes closed, quiet yourself and become conscious of your breathing. Let your thoughts, feelings, and concerns fade as you consider the selected passage in the previous step (*oratio*). If you're distracted, use your prayer word to help you return to silence. This is *contemplatio*.

This exercise can take as long as you want, but in the context of this Bible study, 10 to 20 minutes should be sufficient.

Many teachers of prayer call contemplation the prayer of resting in God, a prelude to losing oneself in the presence of God. Scripture is transformed in our hearing as we pray and allow our hearts to unite intimately with the Lord. The Word truly takes on flesh, and this time it is manifested in our flesh.



How to Use This Bible-Study Companion

THE BIBLE, along with the commentaries and reflections found in this study, will help participants become familiar with the Scripture texts and lead them to reflect more deeply on the texts' message. At the end of this study, participants will have a firm grasp of the Pastoral Letters and the Letter to the Hebrews, becoming more cognizant of the spiritual nourishment these letters offer. This study is not only an intellectual adventure, it's also a spiritual one. The reflections lead participants into their own journey with the Scripture readings.

Context

When the authors wrote and edited the Pastoral Letters and the Letter to the Hebrews, they were dealing with later developments within Christianity that earlier writers of the New Testament did not address. To help readers learn about each passage in relation to those around it, each lesson begins with an overview that puts the Scripture passages into context.

NOTE: Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible*, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the *New American Bible* may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Part 1: Group Study

To give participants a comprehensive study of the Pastoral Letters and the Letter to the Hebrews, the book is divided into six lessons. Lesson 1 is group study only; Lessons 2 through 6 are divided into two parts: group study and individual study. For example, Lesson 2 covers 1 Timothy 3—6. The study group reads and discusses only Chapters 3 and 4 (Part 1). Participants privately read and reflect on Chapters 5 and 6 (Part 2).

Group study may or may not include *lectio divina*. With *lectio divina*, the group meets for ninety minutes using the first format on page 16. Without *lectio divina*, the group meets for one hour using the second format on page 16, and participants are urged to privately read the *lectio divina* section at the end of Part 1. It contains additional reflections on the Scripture passages studied during the group session that will take participants even further into the passages.

Part 2: Individual Study

The passages not covered in Part 1 are divided into shorter components, one to be studied each day. Participants who don't belong to a study group can use the lessons for private sacred reading. They may choose to reflect on one Scripture passage per day, making it possible for a clearer understanding of the Scripture passages used in their *lectio divina* (sacred reading).

A PROCESS FOR SACRED READING

Liguori Publications has designed this study to be user friendly and manageable. However, group dynamics and leaders vary. We're not trying to keep the Holy Spirit from working in your midst, thus we suggest you decide beforehand which format works best for your group. If you have limited time, you could study the Bible as a group and save prayer and reflection for personal time.

However, if your group wishes to digest and feast on sacred Scripture through both prayer and study, we recommend you spend closer to ninety minutes each week by gathering to study and pray with Scripture. *Lectio*

divina (see page 11) is an ancient contemplative prayer form that moves readers from the head to the heart in meeting the Lord. We strongly suggest using this prayer form whether in individual or group study.

GROUP-STUDY FORMATS

1. Bible Study With *Lectio Divina*

About ninety minutes of group study

- ✠ Gathering and opening prayer (3–5 minutes)
- ✠ Scripture passage read aloud (5 minutes)
- ✠ Silently review the commentary and prepare to discuss it with the group (3–5 minutes)
- ✠ Discuss the Scripture passage along with the commentary and reflection (30 minutes)
- ✠ Scripture passage read aloud a second time, followed by quiet time for meditation and contemplation (5 minutes)
- ✠ Spend some time in prayer with the selected passage. Group participants will slowly read the Scripture passage a third time in silence, listening for the voice of God as they read (10–20 minutes)
- ✠ Shared reflection (10–15 minutes)
- ✠ Closing prayer (3–5 minutes)

To become acquainted with lectio divina, see page 11.

2. Bible Study

About one hour of group study

- ✠ Gathering and opening prayer (3–5 minutes)
- ✠ Scripture passage read aloud (5 minutes)
- ✠ Silently review the commentary and prepare to discuss it with the group (3–5 minutes)
- ✠ Discuss the Scripture passage along with the commentary and reflection (40 minutes)
- ✠ Closing prayer (3–5 minutes)

Notes to the Leader

- ✘ Bring a copy of the *New American Bible*, revised edition.
- ✘ Plan which sections will be covered each week of your Bible study.
- ✘ Read the material in advance of each session.
- ✘ Establish written ground rules. (Example: We won't keep you longer than ninety minutes; don't dominate the sharing by arguing or debating.)
- ✘ Meet in an appropriate and welcoming gathering space (church building, meeting room, house).
- ✘ Provide name tags and perhaps use a brief icebreaker for the first meeting; ask participants to introduce themselves.
- ✘ Mark the Scripture passage(s) that will be read during the session.
- ✘ Decide how you would like the Scripture to be read aloud (whether by one or multiple readers).
- ✘ Use a clock or watch.
- ✘ Provide extra Bibles (or copies of the Scripture passages) for participants who don't bring their Bible.
- ✘ Ask participants to read the introduction (page 19) before the first session.
- ✘ Tell participants which passages to study and urge them to read the passages and commentaries before the meeting.
- ✘ If you opt to use the *lectio divina* format, familiarize yourself with this prayer form ahead of time.

Notes to Participants

- ✘ Bring a copy of the *New American Bible*, revised edition.
- ✘ Read the introduction (page 19) before the first session.
- ✘ Read the Scripture passages and commentaries before each session.
- ✘ Be prepared to share and listen respectfully. (This is not a time to debate beliefs or argue.)

Opening Prayer

Leader: O God, come to my assistance.

Response: O Lord, make haste to help me.

Leader: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...

Response: ...as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Leader: Christ is the vine and we are the branches. As branches linked to Jesus, the vine, we are called to recognize that the Scriptures are always being fulfilled in our lives. It is the living Word of God living on in us. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your divine wisdom, knowledge, and love.

Response: Open our minds and hearts as we study your great love for us as shown in the Bible.

Reader: (Open your Bible to the assigned Scripture(s) and read in a paced, deliberate manner. Pause for one minute, listening for a word, phrase, or image that you may use in your *lectio divina* practice.)

Closing Prayer

Leader: Let us pray as Jesus taught us.

Response: Our Father...

Leader: Lord, inspire us with your Spirit as we study your Word in the Bible. Be with us this day and every day as we strive to know you and serve you and to love as you love. We believe that through your goodness and love, the Spirit of the Lord is truly upon us. Allow the words of the Bible, your Word, to capture us and inspire us to live as you live and to love as you love.

Response: Amen.

Leader: May the divine assistance remain with us always.

Response: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



INTRODUCTION

Pastoral Letters and The Letter to the Hebrews

BESIDES THE PASTORAL LETTERS, this volume of the *Liguori Catholic Bible Study* series also contains the book of Hebrews, which is not one of the Pastoral Letters but which contains a theological message about Jesus and the gifts we receive through him. Like the Pastorals, it was a later letter, written around the end of the first century.

Read the overview for each letter before studying the letter.

PASTORAL LETTERS: 1 AND 2 TIMOTHY, TITUS

A woman was sitting on a park bench alongside a bicycle path when a boy of about fifteen years of age came riding toward her on his bike. When she saw him, she thought of her own son who was about the age of the boy and who was off with his friends, bicycling in a different part of town. She knew her son was growing up and needed to be with his friends, but she was a mother and did not like the idea of his becoming an adult. In her mind, he was growing up too fast, but she also knew that she had to allow him to move along in life. She laughed at her feelings and said to herself, “After all, I am a mother.”

Just then, the boy on the bike was on the path in front of her. A small knapsack tied precariously to the back of the bike seat was falling to the side and, just as the boy was passing her, it fell off. The boy retrieved his

knapsack and made several attempts to reattach it to the bike. Each time he thought he had it tied securely, it would sag to one side or the other.

The woman went over to the boy and said, “Let me show you how to do it.” She had done it enough for her own son. She tied the knapsack to the back of the bike by centering it behind the seat.

When she had finished, the boy asked, “Why did you do that for me?”

The woman, surprised at the question, answered, “I don’t know. You had trouble; I knew how to fix it. That’s all! Besides, I had something to share with you, and I wanted to share it!” As the boy rode away, the woman continued to think about his question, and she said to herself, “After all, I am a mother.”

Three letters in the New Testament (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus) are known as the Pastoral Letters. They are basically letters from pastors to other pastors. Although we do not know the occasion for the letters, we can recognize from internal evidence that the authors were showing concern for the developments occurring within the Church. Like the mother in the opening story, they realized that the Church was growing and they wanted to assure themselves that as the Church matured, the message of Christ would always be central to its development.

In the letters, we meet an author who claims to be Paul the Apostle and who has great love for a Church that was developing with the times.

The name *Pastoral Letters*

The name *Pastoral* comes from the Latin word *pastor*, which can mean “shepherd,” i.e., one who is a spiritual leader. Jesus was the “Good Shepherd,” the perfect pastor. The Pastoral Letters stress the emerging roles of spiritual leadership in Church matters and address the establishment of a structure needed to deal with the growing numbers of people joining the Church. When these letters were written, the Church had moved from a concept of a united group of local assemblies to a more universal concept of Church.

Because the first generation of Christians—among them the original twelve apostles—was dying, an urgent need to develop an apostolic tradition was becoming more evident. Leaders had to pass their leadership

on to others in order for the Church to survive. The pastorals provide directives for maintaining a common lifestyle within the early Christian community, a lifestyle based on the original teaching of the apostles and the early disciples, yet one that recognized a need for establishing norms for leadership within the Church.

Author

From the late second century until the nineteenth, scripture scholars considered Paul to be the author of these pastorals, since the author identifies himself as Paul in the first lines of the pastorals. In the early nineteenth century, however, most scholars came to believe that Paul did not write the letters, and that the author was an unknown Christian familiar with Paul's writings. When the author or authors of the pastorals wrote their letters, Paul's writings had become well known among many Christian communities. The First Letter to Timothy and the Letter to Titus are more formal in content than the Second Letter to Timothy, a fact which may point to a different author for Second Timothy, although the letter treats similar themes.

The custom of identifying oneself by another's name was an accepted custom during the time in which the Scriptures were written. The use of Paul's name indicates that the author believed that he was faithful to the teachings of the apostle, who was most likely dead at the time the pastorals were written. If the letter sounded like it came from the pen of Paul, very few would object to the author's using Paul's name.

Since the author sounds so much like Paul, it becomes difficult to comment on the letter without referring to the author as Paul. Some chose to refer to the author as the "Pastor." In most cases, this commentary will refer to the unknown author as simply "the author." At other times, it will be necessary to say, "The author, speaking as Paul," since the author has taken some events from Paul's life and inserted them in such a way that Pauline authorship seems extremely authentic.

Some modern commentators believe that the author used Paul's name to refute others who were using his name to propose false teachings. Since many of the people were unable to read Paul's letters, some preachers

could preach messages contrary to those taught by Paul and convince their audience that Paul had indeed written such messages. With an emerging organization of bishops and presbyters in the Church, it was necessary to present a proper message of a structure which sought to faithfully preserve its apostolic tradition. The Pastoral Letters sought to present such a message.

There are many reasons for most scholars to doubt the Pauline authorship. The style of Paul's letters was often strong, direct, and emotional, whereas the pastoral letters are more specific and far less emotional. The most convincing argument against Pauline authorship is the situation of the Church that is addressed in the pastorals. The content reveals a Church far more advanced and organized than that found in Paul's time, with bishops, elders, and deacons having specific functions. The vocabulary differs to a great extent from that used in Paul's other letters, and some words actually have different meanings from those found in Paul's writings. The institutional aspects addressed in these letters appear to be a second-century development within the Church.

As the Church developed, false and subtle teachings were beginning to challenge the doctrines of the Church. Many commentators believed that the main heresy that threatened the Church when the letter was written was a heresy known as Gnosticism, which claimed to have secret knowledge about the mysteries of God's relationship with the world. Gnosticism, however, included many factions which often did not agree with one another. This makes it difficult to identify Gnosticism as a single, consistent form of teaching. Since little is known about this heresy, it becomes difficult for some to claim that the Pastoral Letters were specifically combating this or that particular heresy, although there are apparently some aspects of Gnostic teachings challenged in the pastorals.

Outline for 1 Timothy

Greeting, Prayer, and Order in Ministry (1:1—3:16)

The letter receives its name from the person the author addresses as Timothy, who was Paul's companion. The first part urges Timothy to instruct some unnamed people not to teach false doctrines. The author views Timothy

as one sent by the community to fight against false teachings. The author speaks of God as savior. Although the author speaks of worship within the Church, he is actually looking at the Church at prayer as it relates to the world around it. He elaborates about the qualities of bishops and deacons and ends the passage with an ancient hymn about Christ.

Order in the Church (4:1—6:21)

The author warns against false asceticism, noting that everything created by God is good. He urges Timothy to train himself in true doctrine and to ignore those who have contempt for him because of his youth. He establishes rules for the treatment of elders, widows, presbyters, and slaves. One should be content with food and clothing and to avoid the sins of the rich. The author urges Timothy to tell the rich to rely on God rather than on their wealth.

Outline for 2 Timothy

Witnessing to the Lord (1:1—2:26)

The author begins with the usual greeting and thanksgiving. In Paul's name, he offers himself as a model for Timothy to follow, reminding Timothy about the gifts the Lord has given to him, especially the gift of true faith. He urges Timothy to remain faithful to the message he has learned and to recognize that suffering will accompany those who preach the message of Christ. He stresses the need for Timothy to join others in pursuing faith, love, and peace with a pure heart and encourages him to correct others so that they will return to faith in the Lord.

Faithfulness to the Message (3:1—4:22)

The author gives an example of the vices of false teachers and urges Timothy to remain faithful to what he has learned. He must preach this message at all times, both when convenient and inconvenient. The author, speaking as Paul, relays his own example of faithfully serving the Lord, and offers his ministry as a model for Timothy. He speaks as though he is coming to the end of his life, saying that he has finished the race and kept the faith.

In the midst of his instructions to Timothy, Paul expresses his own loneliness and longing for Timothy to join him.

The Letter to Titus

The Letter to Titus consists of only three chapters. Titus was a Gentile convert and coworker with Paul during his third missionary journey. He apparently came from Antioch (Galatians 2:1) and was later sent to Corinth when the community was undergoing one of the many crises it faced in the early years of its development (2 Corinthians 7:13–15). Titus had the duty of taking up the collection at Corinth to be used for the needs of the Church at Jerusalem. The present letter places him as an administrator of the Christian community at Crete.

In the Letter to Titus, the author tells Titus to choose elders for the Christian community at Crete, and he provides a list of qualifications for elders and bishops. He tells Titus to offer counsel to people of every age, and he urges Christians to accept the control of civic authority.

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

Hebrew Background

In the Letter to the Hebrews, the author compares the priesthood of Jesus with the priesthood of the high priests of the Old Testament period. Understanding the background of the priesthood of the Old Testament will be helpful in understanding the Letter to the Hebrews.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac was the father of Jacob, who was the father of the twelve sons of Israel. Among the sons was one named Levi, whose offspring were later chosen by the Lord during the Israelites' journey through the desert to be priests for the Israelite nation. This right to priesthood belonged only to the offspring of Levi.

Moses and Aaron belonged to the line of Levi, but during the Israelites' journey through the desert, God directed Moses to set aside Aaron and his sons as priests who would offer sacrifice on behalf of the people. The other offspring of Levi would also serve as priests, but their function

would be to care for the implements in the sanctuary and those used for worship.

The Lord told Moses to dress Aaron in special vestments as a sign of Aaron's office as high priest and to perform a ritual anointing and sacrifice on behalf of Aaron. After this, the sons of Aaron were also anointed as priests, but there was to be only one living high priest (see Exodus 28 and 29).

After living separately from the community of the Israelites for seven days after the consecration of Aaron and his sons, Aaron came forward on the eighth day, blessed the people, and with Moses, entered the tabernacle to take possession of it. Taking possession of the tabernacle meant that the sons of Aaron would offer sacrifice in the tabernacle of the Lord, which was the area where the Lord dwelt. During the journey of the Israelites in the desert, the tabernacle was a portable dwelling place. God instructed Moses on the construction of the tabernacle, which contained an inner chamber known as the *Holy of Holies*, and an outer chamber known as the *Holy Place*. The *Holy of Holies* was separated from the outer chamber by a veil.

The priestly family of Levi had the duty of caring for the tent of worship for each tribe. When the Israelites divided the land into twelve units for the twelve tribes of Israel, the tribe of Levi did not receive an allotted piece of land, but received a portion of land within each of the settlements of the twelve tribes. As a result, the offspring of Levi received their call to priesthood, not because they chose it, but because they were born into it. Since the offspring of Aaron were the priests who offered sacrifice at the altar, the role of "high priest" would come from the line of Aaron.

In the desert, when Aaron was nearing death, he, his son (Eleazar), and Moses ascended a mountain where Moses stripped Aaron of his priestly garments and put them on Eleazar, thus designating him as high priest over his brothers. With the death of Aaron, the people accepted Eleazar as their high priest. This passing on of the role of high priest would continue as each high priest died. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews will refer to this need to choose a new high priest in Israel at the death of the previous high priest.

The author of the letter apparently encountered an audience weary of living as Christians in the midst of pagans, and he recognized the need to inspire them with solid theology. He chose to teach a deep, theological truth, encouraging his readers to trust Jesus Christ and recognize how he changed their lives. He teaches that Jesus Christ is the one and only eternal high priest of the New Covenant, the one who offered his life as a sacrifice for our salvation. He tells us that we all share in the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ who calls us his brothers and sisters.

Author

In the early centuries, some believed that Paul wrote the Letter to the Hebrews, and this belief apparently helped it to become so well received. During the last five centuries, a large number of commentators rejected the idea of Pauline authorship. Although the author appears to be familiar with some of Paul's letters, the style, language, and theology have no resemblance to any characteristics found in the letters of Paul.

Origen, a third-century theologian, attributed the letter to an unknown author. Because of the excellent Greek and the exalted style of the writing, some commentators suspect that Apollos, a companion of Paul who was noted for his oratorical skills, is the true author of the Letter to the Hebrews. Commentators named other members of the early Church community as possible authors of the letter, but lacking solid proof, the list of names is only a guess. In the end, we must simply state that the Letter to the Hebrews was written by an anonymous author.

Characteristics of the Letter

Except for the ending, the Letter to the Hebrews neither sounds like a letter nor follows a letter format. Instead, it resembles a long sermon that presents an explanation of the Old Covenant and its relationship to Christ. It exhorts the community to remain firm in faith and hope. The author writes in excellent Greek and uses as a source the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament.

Date and Place

Some commentators date the writing of this sermon near the end of the first century, based mainly on a letter from Clement of Rome, who wrote around the year 96 AD. In the First Letter of Clement of Rome, Clement uses statements that sound as though they originated in the Letter to the Hebrews. Although Clement may be quoting from Hebrews, he could be using a source also used by the Hebrews author even though Clement does not claim to be quoting from Hebrews. The internal evidence in the sermon seems to support the idea that it was written somewhere within the second half of the first century. This could be anywhere from 60 to 90 AD.

Due to the references referring to Temple worship, some commentators believe that the author wrote Hebrews before the Temple was destroyed around 70 AD. The author, however, may not have viewed the destruction of the Temple as significant for his message. Although the author speaks of activities that usually took place in the Temple (sacrifice and forms of offerings), he may simply be knowledgeable about Old Testament writings, which not only viewed the Temple as a place of worship but also saw the tent or tabernacle in the wilderness as the place of worship during the sojourn in the desert.

The closing of the letter contains greetings from “those from Italy” (13:24), which may support the theory that the Letter to the Hebrews was actually written in Rome. Most commentators, however, do not view this supposition as convincing.

Audience

Although the present title of the letter is “The Letter to the Hebrews,” this greeting is found nowhere in the letter. In the past, some commentators believed that the continual reference to the Old Testament showed that it was written to a Jewish audience who would naturally be concerned with the Old Testament. Most commentators today, however, believe that it was written to Christians, both Jewish and Greek, who were familiar with the Greek Old Testament. Toward the end of the first century, Greek

Christians would have realized the importance of the Old Testament to the Christian message.

Outline of the Letter to the Hebrews

The Theme of the Letter and the Identity of Jesus Christ (1:1—4:13)

The opening of the letter speaks immediately about Christ's exalted position as God's Son and his special place above that of the angels. Since Christ is so exalted and since he has become human for our sake, we are urged to pay special attention to his message. Christ is more exalted than Moses, and we should avoid hardening our heart against the message of God as the people of Israel did in the desert. The Word of God which comes through Christ is like a two-edged sword that cuts deeply into our life.

The Accomplishments of Jesus Christ (4:14—10:18)

The author describes how Christ qualifies to become a high priest, but a high priest of the New Covenant. After exhorting his listeners to pay attention to the basics of Christ's message and to move on from there, the author shows how Christ belongs to the eternal priesthood of Melchizedek rather than to the temporal priesthood of Levi. As the new high priest of the New Covenant, Christ offers himself once and for all for our salvation. In Christ, the Old Covenant gives way to the new.

Encouragement in the Faith and the Ending of the Letter (10:19—13:25)

The author contrasts the limitations of the Old Covenant with the gifts of the New Covenant, and he uses this as a reason for his listeners to remain faithful to what they have heard. He chooses magnificent examples from the heroes of the past (the Old Testament) and calls his listeners to live their lives in union with Christ, who never changes. Christians should keep their eyes on Christ. They are to enter the new tabernacle, the heavenly Jerusalem, through him. More explicitly, the author tells his readers how they should live a life worthy of their calling.



LESSON 2

Proper Conduct

1 TIMOTHY 3—6

But if I should be delayed, you should know how to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth (3:15).

Opening Prayer (SEE PAGE 18)

Context

Part 1: 1 Timothy 3—4 The author establishes the qualifications to be found in the selection of bishops and deacons. He writes about these qualifications to tell the people how to behave in the household of God. If they cannot manage their own household, how will they manage “the household of God, which,” he states, “is the church of the living God” (3:15)? The author warns against false asceticism which forbids marriage and the eating of certain kinds of food, stating that everything God created is good. After speaking about false asceticism, he instructs Timothy to train himself spiritually and to teach the truth in order to be a good minister of Jesus Christ. Although he is young, he is to set an example of living his message for the people to follow.

Part 2: 1 Timothy 5—6 The author writes about Timothy’s duties toward others, including his duties toward the elderly, widows, presbyters, and slaves. He confronts the false teachings of those

who are preaching something different from the message he gave to Timothy, and he warns against temptations in striving for wealth. Timothy should strive to keep the commandments and urge the rich not to rely on uncertain wealth, but to rely on the treasures of their good works.

PART 1: GROUP STUDY (1 TIMOTHY 3—4)

Read aloud 1 Timothy 3—4.

3:1–7 Qualifications for Bishops

The author begins by stating that he is instructing the community with certainty when he tells them about the qualifications for bishop. The word *bishop* does not refer to bishops as we know them today, but rather to leaders of the community, known as the overseers of the community. Because the role of leadership is important to the community, the author lists personal virtues the bishop must possess, and he then follows with external signs that refer to the bishop's family, position in the Church, and relationship to those outside the Church.

The bishop must be a man above reproach, “married only once,” sensible, respectable, hospitable, a good teacher, gentle, peaceful, and moderate in his use of drink and money (3:2–3). His management of his own household is an indication of how successfully he will lead others. This elder must show signs of managing his household well, and his children should be respectful and obedient. To avoid any pride that could lead him into sin, the bishop must not be a new convert. He must also be held in esteem by those outside the Church, so that he does not fall into disgrace and into the trap of the devil. This last qualification reveals the author's concern for the proper place of the Christian in the pagan world.

3:8–16 Qualifications for Deacons

The author turns his attention to the deacon. The role of the deacon is not clearly indicated, but the qualifications are as strict as those needed for

anyone who strives to be an elder or overseer (bishop) of a community. In the Acts of the Apostles, we read that deacons were appointed to care for the Greek widows (see Acts 6:1–4), but their duty also extended to preaching the Word of God (6:8–10; 8:4–6). The First Letter to Timothy adds other stipulations. Deacons must be serious, direct, and truthful, moderate in their drink, and not greedy for any personal gain. They must hold onto the faith with a clear conscience. In the pagan world, those seeking an office had to undergo a period of testing first. The author believes that the same type of testing period should apply to those seeking to be a deacon. This period refers to the manner in which one responds to the call of being a Christian in the world. Only if nothing is found against them may they serve as deacons.

The author interrupts his message with an abrupt statement about the role of women. He says that women must also be serious and trustworthy, “not slanderers, but temperate and faithful in everything” (3:11). Although the author may be addressing the wives of deacons here, most commentators believe he is speaking to deaconesses.

Like those chosen as bishops, the deacons must be married no more than one time, and should be good managers of their children and households. If they serve well, they will receive a place of high standing for themselves and gain assurance in their works for Christ Jesus. The author seems to be saying that deacons should find their ministry to be a rewarding experience that strengthens their faith.

In his letters, Paul often expresses his desire to visit the community to whom he is writing. Paul does the same here. In the event that his visit is delayed, he tells them that he is writing to them so they may know how to conduct themselves as members of the household of God, which he identifies as “the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth” (3:15).

As the firm foundation of all truth, the Church knows the mystery of God’s plan, which it professes with a living faith. The author quotes part of an early Christian hymn to profess this mystery that was revealed through Jesus’ life on earth. He was revealed in flesh and vindicated in spirit, meaning that Jesus was put to death and raised from the dead. His

resurrection was announced by the angels, and preached to the Gentiles. People throughout the world believed in him, and he was taken up in glory. Implied in this last idea is the message that Jesus is Lord and will come again.

4:1–5 False Asceticism

The author states the Spirit warned that false teachers would arise, who will themselves turn away from the faith and strive to lead others away from the truth with false ascetical practices. What they teach will sound logical, but, in reality, they will be teaching the message of fraudulent spirits and demons. Perhaps prompted by the image of branded fugitive slaves, the author describes these false teachers, now enslaved by evil, as liars “with branded consciences” (4:2).

False teachers forbid marriage and the eating of certain foods. They urge a withdrawal from the material world, which they view as evil—a perspective found in Gnosticism and other heretical beliefs. The author does not accept this thinking, stating that everything God created is good. Nothing created by God is to be rejected, provided it is received with a spirit of thanksgiving. Abstaining from food does not make a person holy. God’s Word and the prayer of the people sanctify creation.

4:6–16 Timothy’s Example

The author tells Timothy that he will be a good minister and servant of Christ to the brothers and sisters in the Church if he passes on the instructions he received from Paul. He will be nourished by the words of faith and sound teaching that he (Timothy) has already been following. The author warns Timothy to avoid worldly myths, and he further tells him to train himself spiritually, adding that, as valuable as physical training is, it is limited. Devotion is valuable in every way because it offers a promise of life now and life hereafter. He states his message is true and worthy of full acceptance. The author reminds Timothy that all followers of Christ toil and struggle because they have placed all their hope in the living God, whom he identifies for the second time in his letter as the savior of all, especially believers.

As a faithful follower of Christ, Timothy must urge the people to follow his message.

In Timothy's day, old age was respected as a time when a person had wisdom which was gained from a lifetime of experiences, and youth was a time when people should listen to their elders. The author tells Timothy not to allow the people to look down on him because of his youth, but to set an example "in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity" (4:12). Timothy's mission as set forth here is to continue to read the scriptures to the people, to preach, and to teach them until Paul arrives. He is directed not to neglect the gift he received through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. The prophecy alludes to the manner in which Timothy was chosen to preside over the community. The call to leadership was fulfilled when the leaders of the community laid hands on him.

Because of his special call, Timothy must pay attention to his duties and devote himself totally to them so that everyone will be able to witness his progress. By attending to himself and the teachings he received from Paul, Timothy will save himself and those who listen to him.

Review Questions

1. What are your thoughts about the manner of life demanded of bishops in 1 Timothy?
2. What are your thoughts about the manner of life demanded of deacons in 1 Timothy?
3. Why does the author reject some forms of asceticism?
4. What is the meaning behind the laying on of hands on Timothy?

Closing Prayer (SEE PAGE 18)

Pray the closing prayer now or after *lectio divina*.

Lectio Divina (SEE PAGE 11)

Relax your body and maintain a posture of prayer (back straight, eyes shut, feet flat on the floor). This exercise can take as long as you want, but in the context of this Bible study, ten to twenty minutes should be sufficient.

The meditations that follow are provided only to help group participants use this prayer form, but note that *lectio* is intended to bring one to a place of prayerful contemplation where the Word of God speaks to the hearer from his or her heart. (See page 11 for further instruction.)

Qualifications for Bishops (3:1–7)

When a particular diocese was expecting an appointment of a new bishop, some ordained priests and laity sent notes to those in charge of naming a bishop, outlining the qualities they hoped to find in their new bishop. Except for the qualification of being married only once and controlling his children (qualifications they ignored), they sent the list of qualifications similar to those found in the First Letter to Timothy. Some people laughed when they saw the qualifications found in these letters, asking if there were anyone who could fit all these demands. It seemed that the people were seeking a superhuman person.

The author of the First Letter to Timothy recognized the dedication needed for a person to be a leader in the Church, and he believed that people of such high virtue did indeed exist. In reality, these qualifications should be the aim of all people who profess to be followers of Christ.

✠ *What can I learn from this passage?*

Qualifications for Deacons (3:8–16)

The author's qualifications for deacons parallel those of bishops. Bishops and deacons who live exemplary lives represent the Church and become an example for other members of the Church. For the Church to remain faithful to Christ, it must have leaders who faithfully live Jesus' message. The hope the author exhibits is that the Church will learn to live Christ's message not only through the preaching of its leaders and guides, but through their example. Someone once said, "What you are shouts so loudly

that I can't hear what you are saying." The daily lives of Church leaders and guides are to shout out to the world their love for Christ. Once a person accepts a specific role in the Church, that person has the obligation to live as an exemplary Christian in the world.

✠ *What can I learn from this passage?*

False Asceticism (4:1–5)

In the early days of the Church, many hermits went into the desert to live a highly ascetical life, which included eating a sparse amount of food and ceaselessly praying. Saint Anthony of the desert chose this form of life, and others went into the desert to learn from him. In time, ascetics went beyond the practices of St. Anthony and crucified their body with practices of fasting and self-beatings to the point that, within a short period of time, they became ill. The need for a change of attitude was obvious.

Saint Benedict saw what was happening to many of those who chose lives as hermits, and he wrote a rule which called for a balanced approach to asceticism, one that balanced prayer, work, and fasting in a healthy manner that did not lead to illness or an early death. His monks lived together in a community and supported one another. He taught that true asceticism does not view God's creation as evil, but as a creation that makes the proper use of the gifts of God.

God gave people the ability to work and pray. Saint Benedict's message fits all Christians who live in the world today. We are all called to work and pray in a balanced manner for the sake of the special mission God has given to us. In doing this, we are serving the Lord, no matter where we are.

✠ *What can I learn from this passage?*

Timothy's Example (4:6–16)

A reality of life is that people cannot give what they do not have. For instance, a man who knows nothing about the engine of a car cannot teach another man how to fix a car's engine. When the author writes to Timothy, he encourages Timothy to become a living example of the lesson he teaches. One chosen to the awesome task of teaching the faith must be willing to be a living example of the faith. In order to do this, Timothy must first live a life

dedicated to the Lord. He cannot teach true spirituality unless he himself is a spiritual person dedicated to the Lord. The people will more readily accept Timothy's message if they see the message has an influence on his life. All Christians have the awesome task of developing a deep, spiritual relationship with the Lord and teaching the faith through their manner of life.

✠ *What can I learn from this passage?*

PART 2: INDIVIDUAL STUDY (1 TIMOTHY 5—6)

Day 1: Duties Toward Others (1 Timothy 5:1–16)

Despite his leadership role, Timothy must continue to show concern for the elders in the community. He must never speak harshly to an older man, but should speak to him as he would to a father. He should treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women, in a pure manner, as sisters. The leadership to which Timothy is called is not one of lording it over others, but one of treating others with respect.

The author now turns his attention to widows and their place in the household of the Church. He states that all people should have consideration for widows, especially for those he calls “truly widows.” He explains that one who is truly a widow is one who has no one to care for her, while a widow with children or grandchildren should be cared for by her family. The children or grandchildren have a debt to pay to their parents, and the care they give them is pleasing to God.

The true widow is a woman who has no one to rely on for support. Having set her sights on God, she spends all of her days and nights in petitions and prayers. The widow, however, who thinks only of fulfilling her own pleasures has already died, although she still physically lives. The author urges Timothy to teach this message so that his listeners may be above reproach. Those who do not look after their relatives, especially members of their immediate families, have denied the faith because their actions show a lack of faith. Such people are worse than pagan unbelievers, since they claim to have faith.

The early Church developed the institution of enrolling widows who chose to dedicate themselves to God and who were supported by the community. The author, however, takes human nature into account, stating that no one should enroll as a widow in the Church unless she is at least sixty years old. Like the bishop and the deacon, the widow must be married only once. She must be a woman of good works, one who has brought up children, shown herself to be hospitable, washed the feet of the saints, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good. Washing the feet of the saints refers to the practice of washing the feet of a traveler who enters one's house. In describing the widows' service to the local church, the author recalls the example of Christ's washing his disciples' feet as set forth in John 13.

The author warns against enrolling younger widows who might eventually be tempted to marry. Instead of leading to holiness, their enrollment will become a means of condemnation for having violated their commitment. The author shows a lack of trust in a younger woman's ability to keep herself busy. Whereas older women can dedicate themselves to prayer and good works, he views younger women as living a life of leisure, with no family to care for, moving from one house to another, wasting time, and becoming gossips and busybodies. In a previous passage, the author warned Timothy not to forbid marriage as the false teachers do. He now encourages young widows to marry, have children, care for a home, and not give the enemy any reason for speaking against Christians. He states that some women have already sinned by turning away from their commitment and caused scandal.

The author concludes by speaking of the duty of the female members of the Church to care for widowed relatives. He apparently is speaking of the obligation to care for widowed family members, no matter how distant the relationship. The author could also be addressing those who have voluntarily taken on the support of a widow, whether related or not. In both instances, the burden on the local church is decreased, which allows for better support of the real widows, meaning those who are in dire need with no one to care for them.

Lectio Divina

Spend 8 to 10 minutes in silent contemplation of the following passage:

When the author writes about caring for widows, he is writing as though it is an obligation and not something that would be nice to do. Christians are meant to accept these obligations to care for those in need when they accept Christianity. Jesus showed love and concern for a widow in the Bible when he raises the only son of a widow to life because he took pity on her (see Luke 7:11–17). He later castigates the scribes who devour the houses of widows, saying that they will receive “a very severe condemnation” (Luke 20:47). He praises a widow who makes a donation of two small coins to the Temple treasury, saying that she has put in more than all the rest, because she gave out of her whole livelihood (see Luke 21:1–4). Christ’s concern for widows offers an example for Christians concerning widows.

✠ *What can I learn from this passage?*

Day 2: Rules for Presbyters (1 Timothy 5:17–25)

The author shows the importance of preaching and teaching when he tells Timothy that the elders who rule well should be well paid, especially when they perform these ministries. Although the elders did not have Timothy’s authority in the community, they were the ones who laid hands on him at the time of his ordination. Timothy was a bishop and a recognized leader of the community who ministered with the elders and other members of the community. Quoting from the “Scripture,” the author reminds Timothy that “the laborer deserves his payment” (Luke 10:7). This quotation supports his message that the elders should not have to concern themselves with physical needs but, instead, should be free to spend their time preaching and teaching.

Quoting the passage about payment from Luke’s Gospel and referring to it as “Scripture” shows that by the early second century, some books of the New Testament were already considered to belong to “Scripture.” The First Letter to Timothy was written in the early second century, more than

fifteen years after Luke wrote his Gospel. When those who wrote in the first century referred to the “scriptures,” they referred only to the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament).

The author notes that the elders and presbyters, because of their position within the community, will be the object of criticism. He warns Timothy not to listen to any accusation against the elders unless two or three witnesses support it. If an elder proves sinful, however, Timothy is ordered to rebuke him publicly in order to fill the remaining elders with a fear of sinning. As difficult as these precepts are to fulfill, the author commands Timothy—before God, Christ Jesus, and the angels—to carry out these orders without any prejudice or favoritism. Along with this order, Timothy is told not to ordain anyone until that person has been proved worthy. In every way, Timothy is to avoid becoming an accomplice to the sins of others. The author also warns him to keep himself pure.

In his disagreement with those who advocate abstinence from all worldly indulgence, the author shows personal concern for Timothy by telling him that he should take some wine. He reminds Timothy that his health has not been good, and he urges him for the sake of his health to take wine and to avoid drinking only water. This implies a concern of the author that Timothy and his ministry not suffer because of the false teachings of others concerning worldly indulgence.

The author concludes this passage with some wise insights into life. The sins of some are obvious and demand some action be taken against them, but there are other sins that are not so obvious and will appear only later. The author may be referring either to the Day of Judgment when a person stands before God, or to the inevitable recognition of sin in time. The same situation applies to good works. Good deeds may be recognized immediately or at some future time, but they will be recognized.

Lectio Divina

Spend 8 to 10 minutes in silent contemplation of the following passage:

Paul the apostle spoke of being anxious to be with the Lord, which means that he longs for the day when he will spend eternity with the Lord. He states that he is willing to remain here on earth to continue his mission if it is the will of the Lord and if it will help others. In attempting to strike a balance between making sacrifices for the love of God and one's health, the author teaches that taking care of one's health is more important, since all have a mission in God's creation.

Timothy is important to the community, and the author wishes to assure himself that Timothy will be able to serve well his ministry. In some of the letters of the early followers of Christ, the writers stated they rejoiced when they had to suffer for Christ. Some, however, who were not suffering would perform some painful act that would make them suffer and often become ill. Other early spiritual writers taught that a person does not have to seek suffering. Offering up to God the suffering that comes in the daily living of life can be a greater act of holiness than causing our own form of suffering. Living a healthy life is important for our particular mission in life. Many spiritual writers believe this is God's will for us.

✠ *What can I learn from this passage?*

Day 3: Rules for Slaves (6:1–2)

The author, who begins this passage by speaking of the attitudes of slaves within the Christian household, has no concern about the social structure which allows for slavery, but he seeks to teach Christian slaves how to live as Christians within their particular state. Without making any statement about the condition of slavery in his era, he urges slaves to act with respect for their masters, so the name of God, as well as Christian teachings, may not be brought into disgrace. This directive follows the same line of thinking found at the beginning of this letter—namely, the need to live in peace with

the civil government. The author clearly does not wish Christian teachings to cause a revolution within the existing social structure.

Because slaves embrace the same teachings as some of their masters, they must not look down on those masters. Since Christian masters are believers and are therefore beloved, they should be treated with greater respect. Paul the Apostle addressed the relationship of slaves to their Christian masters in his Letter to Philemon as well as in his letters to the Colossians and the Ephesians. The author again reminds Timothy that these are the teachings he must share with others.

Lectio Divina

Spend 8 to 10 minutes in silent contemplation of the following passage:

Slavery was accepted throughout the Roman world. Slaves were often foreigners who were conquered and exiled from their home area into another country. In many cases, slaves would starve to death if they were freed, since they had no way of supporting themselves in this foreign land. The best solution in Paul's era was to develop a mutual respect between slaves and their masters.

The author is not necessarily agreeing with slavery in this passage, but he is concerned about the dignity of the human person in a difficult situation. Many slaves had to suffer at the hands of unjust masters, while others served masters who treated them with respect. The mutual respect between slaves and masters underlines the mutual respect Christians should have for all people. In God's eyes, all people are equal, whether slave or free, and all are deserving of respect.

✠ *What can I learn from this passage?*

Day 4: False Teaching and True Wealth (6:3–21)

The author directs Timothy to teach and urge the people to follow his message. Using strong language, the author attacks those who teach messages contrary to the teachings of Christ and the firm doctrines of true religion, stating that they should be seen as conceited and ignorant with a craving for arguments and for disputes about the use of words. The author's accusation here is clearly hurled against those who claim they are wise because of their intelligent-sounding arguments. Among those who taught this were some Gnostics who believed they possessed secret knowledge which others were unable to understand.

The author warns that these false teachings cause disunity within the community, leading to sins such as envy, dissension, slander, base suspicions, and wrangling among people who lack reason and truth. Such people view religion only as a means of personal gain. The author states that religion does offer gain, but the gain comes with godliness and contentment. He teaches that none of us brought anything into the world, and none of us will take anything out of it. Food and clothing are all we need, and these should leave us content.

Those who are seeking wealth are allowing themselves to be tempted and trapped by senseless and harmful desires that lead only to destruction. The author reminds the reader that “the love of money is the root of all evils” (6:10). The eagerness of some people for wealth led them away from the faith and filled their life with an abundance of pain.

The author reminds Timothy that he is committed to God and, as such, must avoid all the errors of false teachers. He specifically lists the virtues that Timothy must practice: “righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness” (6:11). Furthermore, Timothy must fight the good fight of the faith to attain as his prize the gift of eternal life to which he was called. This call apparently alludes to a commitment Timothy made before the assembly, possibly at his baptism or at the time of his consecration to ministry.

The author calls on God, the source of all life, and Christ Jesus, who remained a faithful witness to the truth before Pilate, to witness to the

charge he is giving Timothy. He orders Timothy to follow the command of God and to carry out—blamelessly and without reproach—everything he has been told, until the Lord, Jesus Christ, appears. This points to the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time and at which time the manifestation of Christ will be made to all people. It is more than a visitation from the Lord; it is a manifestation of the Lord.

This manifestation of the Lord will be brought about by God at the appointed time. He gives praise to God, calling him the “King of kings and the Lord of lords” (6:15). Pagans praised the emperors with these words, but the author adds that Jesus alone is immortal and living in an unapproachable brightness that no human being has seen or will be able to see. He declares that honor and everlasting dominion belong to God. This spontaneous prayer of praise ends with the acclamation “Amen.” It is almost a parallel to the prayer found earlier in this letter (see 1 Timothy 1:17).

The author urges Timothy to warn the wealthy of the world not to be proud and not to set their hopes on the uncertainty of their wealth. Instead, they should learn to trust God who provides us with everything needed for our happiness. The author urges Timothy to tell the rich to perform good works, showing themselves to be generous and ready to share. In doing this, the wealthy will build a true foundation for the future, and not one based on the weak foundation of their possessions alone. Through their generosity, they will receive true, eternal life with God.

Instead of ending his letter in the usual manner used in ending Pauline letters, the author ends with an expression of concern for Timothy. He sums up what he has been saying throughout the letter, namely, Timothy should take care of the gifts entrusted to him and he should avoid all false teachings. He warns Timothy against taking part in worldly babbling and the silliness of so-called knowledge. Some people, by professing this knowledge, have strayed from the faith. The letter ends abruptly, wishing that grace will be with all.

Lectio Divina

Spend 8 to 10 minutes in silent contemplation of the following passage:

The author recognizes the self-deception contained in the arguments of those who speak with assurance about messages they do not really understand. In every age, there are people who have made outlandish statements about creation, denying the existence of God. In some cases, they convey their message as though it were being discovered for the first time, when they are actually reciting attitudes from the past which have been rejected by most people familiar with the scriptures.

Christians strive to discover the truth through reading the revealed word of God in the Scriptures. There is an old saying, “The truth will make you free.” Like Timothy, Christians who accept the truth of the scriptures live a life of spiritual freedom in the loving presence of Christ.

✠ *What can I learn from this passage?*

Review Questions

1. What do the author’s rules concerning widows reveal about the culture in which the author lived?
2. When the author writes about the rules for presbyters, what does it reveal about the author’s attitude toward Timothy?
3. Why did the author accept slavery so easily?
4. What does the author say about those who teach doctrines different from those given to Timothy?
5. In what way can you apply the virtues demanded of Timothy to Church leaders today?