

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE WEEK

45 • FAITHFULNESS

Faithfulness

THE FIGHT FOR FAITHFULNESS

Focal Verses • 1 TIMOTHY 6:11–21

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson we will: **EXPLORE** the attitudes and actions Paul charged Timothy to embrace and avoid; **VALUE** personally the attitudes and actions Paul charged Timothy to embrace; and **IDENTIFY** personal actions and attitudes that need to be changed and commit to doing so.

In Focus

Bryce professed to be a Christian and specifically sought to date women in the church. However, Bryce's walk

was very different from his talk. He always pursued a sexual relationship with women, and when he met one who obeyed the Word of God by living sexually pure, he would immediately end the relationship.



One day, Bryce met Breana, a beautiful young lady who loved the Lord. Bryce really liked Breana and told her he could handle dating by her standards. In getting to know Bryce, Breana realized he was not faithful to the standards of God in a dating relationship. So, after much prayer and conversation with others who knew Bryce, Breana decided to end the relationship because she did not feel his intentions were genuine.

Bryce was devastated, and for the first time in his adult life, he turned to the Lord, sincerely asking for Jesus to come into his heart and change his life. Allowing some time to pass, Bryce sought to truly be her friend and brother in Christ rather than pursuing a romantic relationship with Breana.

Being a Christian requires faithfulness through a real commitment to godly living. In today's lesson, Paul encourages Timothy to fight the good fight of faith. When did you make a real commitment to pursue godly living faithfully?

Keep in Mind

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses”
(1 Timothy 6:12, KJV).



“Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have declared so well before many witnesses”
(1 Timothy 6:12, NLT).

KJV 1 Timothy 6:11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;

16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath

seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

21 Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.

NLT **1 Timothy 6:11** But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness.

12 Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have declared so well before many witnesses.

13 And I charge you before God, who gives life to all, and before Christ Jesus, who gave a good testimony before Pontius Pilate,

14 that you obey this command without wavering. Then no one can find fault with you from now until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again.

15 For, at just the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords.

16 He alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him. No human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will. All honor and power to him forever! Amen.

17 Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.

18 Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others.

19 By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life.

20 Timothy, guard what God has entrusted to you. Avoid godless, foolish discussions with those who oppose you with their so-called knowledge.

21 Some people have wandered from the faith by following such foolishness. May God's grace be with you all.

The People, Places, and Times

Timothy. Timothy met the apostle Paul during Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16:1–5). His faith in God was largely due to the example of his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5). He was assigned the responsibility of preaching, teaching, and leading the church in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3–5). It is commonly believed that Timothy was a young man—probably under 30 years old—when he was charged with leading the Ephesian church.

Ephesus. Ephesus was a thriving port city during the first century AD. It was located along the Cayster River next to the Aegean Sea, with a population of nearly 500,000 people. It was mostly revered for its unique image

of the goddess Artemis (Roman: Diana) housed in a great temple, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The city had a large Jewish population, and Paul spent two years ministering and sharing the Gospel with all willing to listen (Acts 19:8–10). This was a tough place to minister, and Paul faced many obstacles. The main challenges he confronted included variations of Christian doctrine circulating in the region (Acts 19:1–7), hostile unbelieving Jews (vv. 8–9), occult activity (vv. 18–19), and riotous crowds (vv. 29–31).

Background

The book of 1 Timothy can rightly be divided into two intersecting themes: right faith and right action. Timothy's main mission in Ephesus was to stop certain people from teaching false doctrine (1 Timothy 1:3–4). Some people believed they had superior

knowledge and, thus, a superior faith. This type of faith had little to do with living righteously in everyday life. The false teachers were spreading this message throughout the churches. There is little doubt that Timothy would have preferred to be elsewhere, as this assignment was a daunting task for a young man of his age. To ensure success, Timothy needed to serve the Lord in the power of the Spirit and remember the example Paul had left him.

At-A-Glance

- 1. Right Faith and Right Action
(1 Timothy 6:11–16)
- 2. Instructions for the Rich (vv. 17–19)
- 3. Guarding the Deposit of Faith
(vv. 20–21)

In Depth

1. Right Faith and Right Action (1 Timothy 6:11–16)

Biblically speaking, faith never refers to one’s opinion, as the word

is popularly used today. Instead, the primary meaning refers to a firm persuasion. A more precise understanding of its use in 1 Timothy involves trusting someone and placing confidence in what they say. With this in mind, Timothy was encouraged to stand firm in faith. He was to avoid the teachings and negative attitudes propagated by the false teachers and instead embrace the sound teachings and godly virtues Paul taught (v. 11).

This was sure to be a difficult task. Therefore, Timothy needed to “fight the good fight of faith” to succeed (v. 12). This phrase was originally used in reference to athletes in ancient Greece and conveyed the idea that Timothy’s assignment would require agonizing effort. This is because Timothy would have to explain his actions to God at the time of Jesus’ return (v. 14). However, Timothy need not fear anything since God has all power, including power

over life and death (vv. 15–16). He was fully equipped for the task.

2. Instructions for the Rich (vv. 17–19)

The problems in the Ephesian church were multifaceted. All of them, however, stemmed from some wrong attitude and doctrine. Just as Timothy had to correct and rebuke the false teachers, he also had to rebuke and correct those who had misguided beliefs about money (vv. 17–19). Timothy was warned of the dangers of embracing this version of prosperity and was commanded to flee from it (vv. 10–11). He was to instruct the wealthy to trust in God instead of money and to invest in the life to come (vv. 18–19).

3. Guarding the Deposit of Faith (vv. 20–21)

The phrase “that which is committed to thy trust” (v. 20) appears

a total of three times in 1 and 2 Timothy (1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 1:13– 14), and refers to the truth of the Gospel. Sound doctrine, faith, and truth are repeated themes throughout these epistles. The church was created to promote and defend them all (1 Timothy 3:15). Some in the Ephesian church believed they had superior knowledge to Timothy's. Still, Paul calls their knowledge false (v. 20). The KJV's use of the word "science" here does not convey the modern meaning but could be translated more generally as "knowledge"; Paul is not anti-science but wants Timothy to avoid false doctrine. Timothy had to guard the Gospel and persist in its truths no matter how inconvenient it became. The reward was sure to be great.

Search the Scriptures

1. Why was it essential for Timothy to successfully guard what was entrusted to him (1 Timothy 6:20)?

2. Why did Paul repeatedly remind Timothy of his calling (v. 12)?

Discuss the Meaning

Many Christians greatly misunderstand the Biblical meaning of faith. Many view it as something that exists solely between themselves and God, with little to no public expression and objective content. What kind of faith does 1 Timothy describe?

Liberating Lesson

We live in exciting times. Many African American pastors are seeking additional resources and sharing teachings to help their congregations take advantage of the wealth of information and opportunities available in their communities. They are also teaching us to keep true to

faith in Jesus Christ in a complex world. This is not just for the sake of head knowledge. We need leaders who can encourage us to stay on course when it comes to aligning our faith with action. We need leaders who can not only recite Greek and Hebrew, but also make the Word practical in our lives. This will give us a vibrant faith that can transform our lives and communities.

Application for Activation

1. Decide to mentor a new believer in living out their faith. If you are a new believer, seek out a mentor to help you live out your faith.

2. List out the ways that you have incorporated your faith into your everyday life.

3. Create a spiritual genealogy chart and track how your faith has been handed down to you.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

1 Timothy 6:11–21

11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

The verse begins with a call to Timothy to be completely different from the men Paul has just talked about in the preceding verses and, instead, to be a “man of God.” The designation

“man of God” (Gk. *anthropos tou theou*, AN-throw-poce too theh-OO) occurs only twice in the New Testament (the other is in 2 Timothy 3:17), but is used with some frequency in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, with the Hebrew *ish elohim* (eesh Eh-loh-HEEM) to refer to men such as Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, Elisha, and other leaders, including some who remain anonymous.

In its usage here, it is not certain whether Paul intends to use the phrase in a specific or general way. Perhaps Paul uses the phrase in a transitional sense uniquely appropriate to the situation of the church at Crete, as signified by what he says about the “man of God” here and in 2 Timothy 3:17. If this is the case, it would apply to every Christian, although its immediate application is to Timothy. Understood this way, the phrase suggests one who was uniquely a “man of God,” but it

is applied here to one who is both a spiritual leader and, at the same time, an example to all believers of what each one should be as a “man of God” (cf. 1 Timothy 4:12).

Paul’s instruction to Timothy is threefold, and both negative and positive. First, Paul commands Timothy to flee “these things,” a reference to the list of sins that he enumerated in the preceding verses, particularly verse 10, where Paul zeros in on the love of money, which he identified as the root of all kinds of evil. The Greek word for flee here is *pheugo* (FEW-go), from which the English word “fugitive” is derived. Timothy must not only run; he must flee, connoting a sense of utter desperation. Timothy must not entertain those sins for a moment. They are not to be touched with the proverbial ten-foot pole. Timothy, like Christians today, must do his utmost to get as far away as he possibly can

from someone or something leading him to these things. He should not be attracted to the blessings that they offer, nor the financial gain they promise.

Second, Paul does not only command Timothy to flee; he must go in a certain direction—following after virtues such as righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness. The phrase “follow after” translates the Greek word *dioko* (dee-OH-ko), which literally means to pursue, and is used predominantly in the New Testament— particularly by Paul—either in the sense of persecuting someone, or in the sense of “following zealously after” or “pursuing” Christian virtues, as here (see Romans 14:19; 1 Corinthians 14:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 2 Timothy 2:22).

12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou

art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

Here Paul continues with his third exhortation to Timothy: “Fight the good fight of faith,” a phrase nearly identical to Paul’s personal statement in a later letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:7). The verb *agonizomai* (Gk. ah-go-NID-zo-my), from which the word “agonize” is derived, and the noun *agon* (Gk. AH-gon) are both used to denote a fight, struggle, or contest. It is not certain whether Paul has an athletic or military metaphor in mind here. What is clear is that the phrase conveys the basic idea of “struggle”: Paul wants Timothy to be willing to suffer for the Gospel, to struggle in its service, and to do so when he is opposed. It is a hard struggle, but it will all seem worthwhile when Timothy sees it in the light of eternity, so he must “lay hold on eternal life.” The present

imperative form of this verb suggests that this struggle is continuous and never-ending. Paul considers it a good fight both because it is engaged in for God and the Gospel, and also because it is inherent to the Gospel making its way in an evil world.

Paul goes on to give the reason for the exhortation by reminding Timothy that he first entered into it when he “professed a good profession before many witnesses.” This describes the day that he first confessed his sin to God and trusted in Christ. So Paul reminds Timothy of that historical moment when he made this confession before so many witnesses, who would have been able to testify to it and thus to Timothy’s public commitment, to which Paul now calls him.

The idea presented here is of Timothy taking hold of the truth and living it out in the context of the struggle he is involved in at Ephesus.

The battle for the Good News is a battle that involves people's eternal destiny, and Timothy has got to keep that perspective. The leaders who had strayed had been seduced by money, prestige, and power. They had lost sight of this eternal dimension, but Timothy had to be different.

13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.

Paul now gives Timothy a charge (Gk. *parangello*, pah-ron-geh-LO), or commands him with authority to do something. In ancient times, a charge for someone to do something with God as witness was a serious matter. A command of this type was binding for those so charged. Paul thus charges Timothy in the sight of God, "who quickeneth all things." "Quickeneth" is

an old English word used to translate the Greek word *zoopoieo* (zoo-oh-poy-EH-oh), which simply means to make alive.

Paul takes the God who gives life to all things as a witness. He also includes Christ Jesus as a witness and also as an example of someone who witnessed (Gk. *martureo*, mar-too-REH-oh), or who spoke a good confession. This would be to encourage Timothy to follow Jesus' moral example in bearing witness to the faith and sound doctrine.

14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: 15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

Timothy is told to keep not just one commandment, but the sound doctrine and instructions that Paul

lays out in this letter. This is to be obeyed, preserved, and guarded, which is the meaning of “keep” (Gk. *tereo*, tay-REH-oh). It must be free from any corruption and “without spot” (Gk. *aspilos*, AS-pee-LOHS) or free from guilt. Paul here may be pointing toward the requirements of Old Testament sacrifices to be unblemished and free from defect.

This command must be kept until Jesus appears (Gk. *epiphaneia*, eh-pee-FAH-nay-ah). The word “appearing” means the event of something becoming visible, usually a deity. Timothy is to keep the sound doctrine given to him until the return of Jesus Christ. “Which in his times” can also be translated as “at the proper time.” It could be that the early church was getting settled with the idea that Jesus’ return was not as imminent as they first believed. It is Jesus “who is the blessed and only Potentate,” or sovereign ruler.

These words were very radical in the time of Imperial Rome and could have been taken for treason.

16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

Paul concludes this praise for God by describing the qualities of Jesus that separate Him from being just an ordinary man but God Himself. Jesus alone has immortality. “Immortal” was a title for God in Hellenistic Judaism, and here Paul adds the qualifier that Jesus alone has immortality. Jesus also dwells in light that no human can approach and also that no man can see Him. This is an allusion to God’s statement that “no man can see me and live” (Exodus 33:20). Jesus carries these same attributes, and in concluding this praise section, Paul also cements sound

doctrine and the fundamentals of the faith. Jesus is God.

17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.

Although he tells Timothy to shun the pursuit of riches, Paul gives Timothy instructions for the rich. They should not be high-minded (Gk. *hupselophroneo*, hoop-seh-low-fro-NEH-oh), that is, haughty. The word carries the connotation of one who is marked not only by arrogance but also a contempt for those they view as not reaching their status. They also are not to trust in “uncertain riches.” This brings to mind Proverbs 23:4–5, where the writer exhorts his audience not to

labor after riches that will take wings and fly.

Instead of being proud and haughty and trusting in wealth, the rich are to trust in God, “who giveth us richly” everything we need. The word for “giveth” (Gk. *parecho*, pah-REH-kho) in this context means to give what is necessary and useful. God provides what is necessary and useful to us, not necessarily luxuries. Timothy must lead the rich to “do good” and “be rich in good works.” Judaism stressed that riches, far from being evil, were a responsibility for those who were given them. Their duty is to be “ready to distribute” (Gk. *eumetadotos*, ew-meh-TA-doe-toce) or be generous without hesitation. They must be willing to “communicate” (Gk. *koinonikos*, koy-no-nee-KOCE). This word is related to *koinonia* (Gk. koy-no-NEE-ah), which is the word we use for communion or participating in fellowship. *Koinonikos*

then carries with it the idea of giving as a form of participating or sharing with others.

19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. 20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: 21 Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.

The idea of laying up treasure in heaven is not new to Judaism and is taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:19–20). Those who give to help others' needs will be free to pursue eternal life.

Lastly, Paul reiterates that Timothy keep the sound doctrine that has been committed to his trust. This involves avoiding profane (Gk. *bebelos*,

BEH-bay-loce) or pointless babbling and oppositions (Gk. *antithesis*, **an-TEA-thee-seese**), or contradictions, of what the false teachers were calling “science” (Gk. *gnosis*, **GNO-seese**). Because of the use of the word *gnosis*, many speculate that these false teachers were involved in “gnostic” heresy. This could have been the case, as many philosophers were said to impart knowledge. This falsely-called knowledge can lead people to err from the faith.

Sources:

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Staton, Knofel. *Timothy-Philemon: Unlocking the Scriptures for You*. Standard Bible Studies. Cincinnati, OH: Standard, 1988.

Wall, Robert W. *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012.

Say It Correctly

Potentate. **PO**-ten-tate.

Aegean. uh-**GEE**-an.

Gnostic. **NOSS**-tic.

Daily Bible Readings

DAY 309

Romans 2:17–29; 3:1–31
Psalm 137

DAY 310

Romans 4:1–25; 5:1–21
Psalm 138

DAY 311

Romans 6:1–23; 7:1–25
Psalm 139

DAY 312

Romans 8:1–39
Psalm 140

DAY 313

Romans 9:1–33; 10:1–21
Psalm 141

DAY 314

Romans 11:1–36; 12:1–21
Psalm 142

DAY 315

Romans 13:1–14; 14:1–23
Psalm 143

Notes