

1 Timothy Devotionals

Read 1 Timothy

Though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief. 1 Timothy 1:13

In 5th grade, my friends finally convinced me to join the basketball team. No one in my family watched or played the game so I really knew nothing beyond throwing the ball in the hoop. After several weeks of practice, I was dribbling across the half-court line when a defender really began guarding me closely until I retreated back across the half-court line. The coach blew the whistle and called me for a turnover and gave the ball to the other team. I looked around in bewilderment until a teammate told me, "Once you pass half-court, you can't go back with the ball." I never did it again.

It's interesting to me that Paul begins his letter to a young pastor by talking about his own sinful regrets. Paul will get to the subject of preaching and leadership, but he starts with an admission that he is not only a shepherd, but a sheep himself. Paul believes himself to have been the worst sinner in the world (v.15). Paul feels the "perfect patience" on display from Jesus towards himself while living in ignorant unbelief, and even at times as a believer he's failed to live out his faith in an impactful way. **Are you ashamed of your life of unbelief? Even if you grew up in church with a knowledge of who God was, until you came to know Christ and receive the Holy Spirit as your teacher and counselor, you still remained in ignorance of the fullness of all God was willing to say to you. You're not condemned for who you were...even if you're sure YOU were the worst sinner in the world. Are you frustrated by your faithless moments since knowing Christ? Remember that Jesus is a patient Savior. He knows you and is always rooting for us to get up off the mat and try again! Don't allow your past before Christ, or your imperfections with Christ to prevent you from serving God faithfully today! He is patiently calling us to partnership, so persist with the Savior who persists with you!**

Read 1 Timothy 2

Who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth 1 Timothy 2:4

No opening illustration today, because this chapter is packed with question-inducing statements. However, I've understood the pattern by reading this chapter several times. We first see that God desires all people to be saved (v.4). Then we begin to see the distinctions between men and women (v.8-15) that echoes Paul's writings in the first letter to the Corinthians. Timothy was pastoring the Ephesians and needed this same direction on appropriate roles. The quietness and submissiveness speak only to the prohibition on women serving in the main pastor-teacher ministry of the church.

He goes on to write about how woman was the first to sin, though we know Adam fell in close behind. Then we have this odd statement about women being saved through childbearing. We know that it's not a call for every woman to be a mother since Paul also advocated for the blessings of singleness (1 Corinthians 7). Instead, the sin of Eve led to the curse of pain in

childbirth. While she took the first step into sin, Eve also began the line of many generations that would lead to the Savior Himself. There was pain. There was shame. Yet, there was salvation in it all because God wasn't taken by surprise at our weaknesses. It was never our self-righteousness that was intended to rescue us, but only the righteousness of Jesus, which leads us back to where we began. God desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of Him. He proved it by taking the very first sinner and making her the opening step to the Savior. **If Eve, who knew God intimately and still sinned, can be redeemed and used...so can you. Is there anywhere in your life you don't believe this? Any pain of sin you can still feel? Remember that Jesus has paid every sin debt. The scars and consequences can often still remain, so be sure to lift those pains to God if there is some good in that pain for someone else.**

Read 1 Timothy 3

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 1 Timothy 3:1

My pastor in college often preached on the qualifications of pastors. It seemed odd to me at first, because he wasn't leaving and few of us would ever be a pastor (I had no clue I would be at the time). However, I now see the value to these types of messages. He was essentially calling us to keep him accountable. If we saw some area that he was not living qualified, we shouldn't simply ignore it. Pastors are not capable of perfection, but are called to examine what their lives show to others. Their ministry is so much more than preaching, though that's what many pastors and churches focus on with this role. I want you to more deeply consider the aspect of overseer.

You may remain in your current church for the rest of your life, but perhaps you'll have another church transition one day. What do you look for? How do you decide between the hundreds, and perhaps thousands of options? You start with the pastor. This term overseer has become very important to me as a pastor, and it's a term I didn't understand and embrace until year 20 of ministry. An overseer cares and watches over the whole church: the membership and the ministries. He must do so as an administrator and a mentor, not as a dictator or a tyrant. There are many true churches you can choose from, meaning churches that teach the Bible as full authority and Jesus as the only way of salvation. Perhaps the best way to know if that's the heart of a church, is to confirm that's the heart of its pastor. **Do you support your pastor as an overseer of the church? He has more concern and care than he can ever express due to all the areas contained within the church. Are you operating under the oversight of your pastor, allowing him to do so with joy? Are you praying for your pastor to have more than good sermons, but to have vision for the church and integrity in his own life? Take time today to pray for your pastor to be a good overseer for his life and his church.**

Read 1 Timothy 4

"Train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way..." 1 Timothy 4:7-8

Exercise has been one of the great enemies to my times of personal devotion. When I made the decision to take better care of my physical body, I found the best time to do so was generally in the morning. However, early morning has been my main time of personal devotion for years. In the opening days of regular exercise, I found my devotional life was slipping as I either tried to rush through or fit it in later. Over the years I have learned how to build balance between the two, ending runs short of my house to leave time to stop and read scripture before prayer-walking the rest of the way. I've grown into an earlier riser in order to ensure I don't have to choose between my body and my soul, but to take time for both.

In our increasingly health-conscious culture, I'd imagine other believers feel this tension as well between spiritual and physical training. Paul doesn't deny that there is some value in physical training, but the greatest value is in spiritual training and growth. Growing awareness of our physical issues often leads us to take steps to strengthen our bodies, lose that weight, or increase our endurance. But we must be more aware of our spiritual condition. A few days away from a physical routine will be felt the next time you come back to it. But the spiritual flabbiness of a few days away from devotional time with God is harder to spot. **Take time for yourself physically. You don't have to run marathons or crush an hour of CrossFit, but we must take care of our bodies in order that we can always be ready for service. Most importantly, take care of yourself spiritually. Are you quicker to exercise your body than you are to exercise your mind and soul through prayer and scripture? Don't elevate a good practice above the best practice. Pray for balance in your life that allows you to prioritize God's best for you. Create space in your life for God to speak through times of devotion with Him. Godliness doesn't just happen; it takes training and intentionality and provides value to all areas of your life.**

Read 1 Timothy 5

"Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands..." 1 Timothy 5:22

First Church (not it's real name) lost its pastor when he unexpectedly moved on to a new congregation. The leaders of First Church were reeling as they discussed what they could do to quickly fill the position without losing much of the growth and vitality the church had experienced under the departing pastor. As they began the process of a pastor search, they allowed the music minister to continue covering the music, as well as handing him preaching responsibilities. The people loved him, and after a few weeks of hearing him preach, the pastor search team decided to end their search and made the music minister their pastor. As more time passed, it became clear he had taken the job to increase his salary. He clearly wasn't ready to handle regular preaching responsibilities, and his weak moral fiber was exposed when he later left his wife for another member of the church.

Timothy was the lead pastor of his church, and as the congregation grew, he knew more leaders were needed. But we cannot allow need to negate our responsibility to install qualified candidates. Timothy was encouraged not to be hasty in selecting these new leaders. Get to know them first. Try them out in lesser opportunities where they can grow and learn. It's better to keep a space open for the right person than to install a square peg into a round hole.

Churches should look for opportunities for their members to serve in ministry. However, those opportunities need to fit the individual's gifting, personality, and even their spiritual maturity in certain situations. God isn't looking for perfect people to fill ministry roles in the church, but He is calling churches to be diligent to provide opportunities. It is the role of the church to help individuals to understand their spiritual gifts and potential areas of service. However, it is also the church's responsibility to protect the church from unqualified and immature believers who are unready to lead alone. **Pray for those you lead in your ministry, that new leaders will emerge. Pray for those unengaged people in your church, that their hearts will be stirred to serve. Pray for a pipeline of leaders and servants that prevents your church from being too hasty in allowing people to serve simply because we're desperate.**

Read 1 Timothy 6

But godliness with contentment is great gain. 1 Timothy 6:6

Coming into a new year, I was struggling. The job I had moved to Pennsylvania to do wasn't exactly as it had been billed. I was spending the majority of my time planning worship services and overseeing youth ministry, which hadn't been the promised emphasis of the role. During the third year, I had our students at a New Year's youth event and was praying about my desire to move into more of a teaching role. As I prayed, I came across this verse and realized that all my attempts at godliness in my personal life and my ministry would remain frustrated if I didn't learn to be content with where I was instead of disappointed over where I wasn't.

Many people, especially in times of challenge, understand their need to pursue God through personal devotion. But if those times of devotion are repeatedly followed by dwelling on discontentment, we miss the opportunity for "great gain." The gain of learning with God from right where we are. The gain of being a person of thankfulness even while we're waiting on new opportunities. This reveals what can easily be missed in our times of personal devotion with the Lord...attitude. If I come to the Lord ready to hear from Him and to bend my plans to His will, there is great gain. If I come instead out of duty while harboring anger or discontentment, any potential gain will be lessened. The opposite of great gain isn't no gain. Even if I come to the scriptures or times of prayer with a poor attitude, there is still something I can gain, though my attitude will greatly hinder the impact of God's message for me. **Scripture doesn't prevent you from asking God to better your situation or to express your frustration to Him. The call for believers is simple: find the opportunities for contentment and thankfulness today so you continue to grow with Jesus and become fully prepared for the next opportunity. Where are you struggling with contentment? Where do you need to repent for the sake of greater fruitfulness from your times of personal devotion with the Lord?**