

New Testament Handles

1 Timothy

We are looking at the smaller NT Letters, finding the appropriate “Handles” with which we can grasp the overall content and carry it with us and have it ready for use in our life as a disciple of Jesus. Tonight, 1 Timothy – which is really one of the simplest letters to grasp, for it has one nice big handle. And we find that handle in 3:15.

- *I write so that...* We teachers of the Scripture just love it when we see phrases like that. There’s not a whole lot of digging necessary to seek to discern Paul’s purpose.
- *You will know how one ought to conduct oneself in the house of God, the church...*

Church Conduct

The instruction from Paul to Timothy, who was his apostolic delegate in Ephesus (AD 62-64), is designed to straighten out an overall healthy church, but who were becoming quite “loose” in how they were conducting the affairs of the church (false teachers, unqualified leadership, materialism, etc.). It does not seem to be all that grand of a departure, so Paul heads on to Macedonia, and yet leaves Timothy behind to shore things up. This letter was written to give direction in that regard, and also to give somewhat timid Timothy the clear direction and courage to fulfill his role as the spiritual leader in that setting.

Thus, this letter helps serve as a general foundation for Church Conduct in any setting.

We can discern 3 clear points of Church Conduct that Paul writes about.

- A. Minister Conduct
- B. Church Conduct
- C. Personal Conduct

And then in addition, there are a significant number of golden “nuggets” of wisdom and theology lying all over the ground in Paul’s letter. We do well to pick these up as we go through. Rather than specific handles, we will just call these “knobs.”

A. Minister Conduct

- 1) Sound Teaching
 - Goal of Instruction – 1:5 (not 1:3-4,6-7)
 - Nourishing words of faith and good doctrine – 4:6-7, 11-16 (not 4:1-5)
 - Teaching that leads to godliness – 6:3, and good reputation – 6:1 (not 6:2,4-5)
- 2) Hold the Fort (Faith)
 - Fight the good fight / keep the faith – 1:18-19a (not 1:19a20) – see also 4:11-16

- Maintain these principles – 5:21
- Fight the good fight / take hold of eternal life / keep the commandment – 6:12-14
- Guard the Trust – 6:20 (not 6:21)

3) Maintain Personal Holiness – 4:7-8, 12, 16, 6:11

B. Church Conduct

1) Prayer – 2:1-2, 8 (also 4:5, 5:5)

Note: Particularly called out for the men (2:8) – not that women are not to pray, but that men are especially to pray, rather than engage in dissension.

2) Male Eldership & Teaching – 2:11-15

3) Leader Qualities & Criteria for Support – 3:1-13, 5:17-22

These are the outworkings of very practical godliness, not measurements of academic or leadership by longevity / seniority.

Notice that financial support is not automatic right of all leadership, but only to those who “work hard” at preaching and teaching (5:17). Not only those who make the teaching and preaching their vocation, but those who are very diligent at it (literally “fatigue themselves” at it).

Notice also that while a special care is exercised in receiving accusations against elders (5:19), honor and submission due elders is not absolute – 5:20-22 – in fact, if they continue in sin, they are to be immediately rebuked in the presence of all.

4) Public Ministry of the Word – 4:13

5) Care of Widows (young and old) – 5:3-16

Practical care as needed, not pious, disconnected handouts. The first responsibility falls to the family (5:4, 8, 16), but where that support is insufficient or unavailable, then full financial support is provided by the church...

And yet, not without criteria and qualification (note the “above reproach” qualification (5:7) is the same as for elders (3:2). She must be a “widow indeed” (5:5 – meaning, left alone, fixed her hope on God through entreaties and prayers), and must meet the qualifications of 5:9-10, which refer to her previous and current ministry to others.

Younger widows are expressly forbidden from financial support, with the rationale of it leading to idleness and meddling (5:11-15). A proper understanding of this “list” (5:9) does involve a kind of “pledge” that was made by the woman to serve the tangible and spiritual needs of the church Body in light of her support (5:12), see also 5:10 – “devoted herself to every good work.”

Thus were a younger widow in crisis, the church would obviously be ready to help in a temporary way, as she moved toward the Apostle’s instruction in 5:14, or alternately Eph 4:28 / 1 Th 3:11-12

C. Personal Conduct

How some particular members of the church ought to conduct themselves, working out love from a pure heart, good conscience, sincere faith.

1) Female Piety – 2:9-11, 3:11, 5:3-16

Paul gives specific instructions as to how women are to conduct themselves relative to...

- Adornment vs. Good Works – 2:9-10
- Receiving vs. Giving Instruction – 2:11-12
- Assisting the Deacons – 3:11
- Finding herself widowed – 5:3-16

2) Minister's Holiness (see A.3 above)

3) Slaves – 6:1-2

Don't take advantage of your believing master, simply because they are a believer. Regard all masters as worthy of all honor, as a specific check against the culture maligning our God and the teachings of Jesus.

4) Contentment – 6:6-10

Whether rich or poor, the love of money is the root of all evil and for many their wandering from the faith, and many "foolish and harmful desires." Paul gives the eternal perspective in 6:7 that we will carry nothing with us from this life.

5) Rich – 6:17-19

Don't fix your hope on your riches, but on God. Beyond this, use your riches to be generous in good works. And in doing so, "take hold of life indeed."

D. "Knobs"

1) Goal of Christian Instruction – 1:5

2) Law is for rebels only – 1:8-11

3) God desires all to be saved – 2:4-6

4) Early "creed" – 3:16

5) Thanking God before meals – 4:5 (see also Rom 14:6)

6) Ordaining for ministry by Elders – 4:14

7) Issuing Rebukes – 5:1-2

8) Voluntary religious convictions take back seat to Practical Needs – 5:23