

Lessons in Leadership 1: 1 Timothy 1:1-11 (see also: Galatians 5:13-23)
**The Benefits of Sound Doctrine: Pure Hearted Love, Good Conscience,
Sincere Faith, HOPE!**

'Men wanted for hazardous journey. Low wages, bitter cold, long hours of complete darkness. Safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in event of success.'

When this advertisement appeared in a 1907 London newspaper, thousands of men responded! Because it had been placed by the noted Antarctic Explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton; that was what made the difference. If Jesus Christ had advertised for workers, the announcement would have read something like this:

Men and women wanted for the difficult task of building my Church. You will often be misunderstood even by those working with you. You will face constant attack from an invisible enemy. You may not see the results of your labor, and your full reward will not come until after all your work is completed. It may cost you your home, your ambitions, even your life.

In spite of the demands that He makes, Jesus Christ receives the applications of many who gladly give their all for Him. He certainly is the greatest Master for whom anyone could work and the task of helping build His church is certainly the greatest challenge to which a believer could give their life. (Wiersbe Bible Commentary, NT, pg 748)

Timothy was such a person who answered Christ's call to help build the church. He was one of the Apostle Paul's closest disciple; Paul treated him like a son. Through the years Timothy grew to become Paul's special assistant helping to tackle some rough assignments – like pastoring the Church in Ephesus that Paul and Silas had earlier planted.

Ephesus was not the easiest church to pastor (Are there any easy churches?). It was the center for Artemis worship who was the goddess of sexual fecundity (you can imagine what their festivals were like). Also it was a major center for the practice of magic and divination. Many of Paul's new converts were tempted to keep their old practices along with their new faith (c.f. Acts 19).

On top of that, Timothy was perhaps not the most natural candidate to pastor this mixed Jewish/Gentile magic practicing church.

1. He was too young to be recognized as a "leader" in the church. Paul had to keep encouraging him not to let his youth be looked down upon.
2. Having a Greek father, Timothy was also a half-breed, a mulatto Jew trying to tell full-blooded Jew's who fancied themselves "rabbis" that they were abusing God's word.

3. He also had stomach and other health problems that Paul counseled him in his busy-ness not to neglect (1 Timothy 5:23)
4. And whether or not he was easily so, pastoring Ephesus was discouraging him. Paul was a powerful leader who had done an amazing work in Ephesus and it was not an easy task for Timothy to carry on after him. He was getting depressed, even thinking of giving up.



So these letters 1 & 2 Timothy were Paul's efforts to personally encourage, pastorally strengthen, and give guidance to Timothy in how to lead a church. This is why these letters are so important for me, for you, especially anyone who would stand out as an example to their community of what it means to be a "Christian."

This is why, for the next several months, we will together be reading – almost thought by thought – through these two letters, to learn for ourselves Paul's **Lessons in leadership**. I encourage you to thoughtfully read these Timothy letters completely through once a week (they are only about 7 pages total). Many of these lessons will be very encouraging, some will leave you feeling unqualified. So jot down your questions or insights to share in your small groups or during our Something More Bible Study. As you seriously explore your faith through these Timothy letters, it will become a growing time, both you as a Christian and us as a Church.

Let's begin with the first eleven verses of Timothy which focus on the personal benefits that we derive from learning sound Christian doctrine instead of some half-baked truth taught by those who know little of what they are talking about. Paul writes ...

the aim of such instruction is
love that comes from a **pure heart**,
a **good conscience**, and **sincere faith**

1 Timothy 1:5

Let those thoughts roll around in your thinking for a moment....

- What does it mean to have a PURE heart?
- If I want to have a good conscience, is there such a thing as a bad conscience?
- What makes a faith sincere, or insincere?

(pause)

As these are the central thoughts of this section we will come back to them, but first let's notice how Paul described God and Jesus in his opening remarks.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus
by the command of **God our Savior**
and of **Christ Jesus our hope**

1 Timothy 1:1

We usually pair the word "savior" with Jesus, not with God. But the Old Testament first called God "savior." Because it was the God of the Old Testament who time and time again saved Israel from their sinful straying. And it was the same God who set in motion the plan to save us all (For God so loved He gave ...), It is the savior God along with Jesus the Messiah who have now both commanded Paul and us to spread the faith. And yes **command** is a military term, Paul did not believe that he, or any Christian has the option of whether or not to share our faith. He would later "*solemnly urge*" Timothy, *to proclaim the message. To be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable* (2 Timothy 4:2). We too often forget that when Jesus sent his Apostles – and now us - out to baptize, teach, and disciple the nations he began with these words

Jesus said to them,
'All authority
in heaven and on earth
has been given to me... GO!

Matthew 28:18

Lesson 1: Sharing our faith has always been a privilege, but it is also a **COMMAND** given to us by God our savior and Jesus our Lord. How well have you followed God's command?

Second, notice that Paul called Jesus "**our HOPE.**" In another letter, Paul called Jesus, **our hope of glory** (Colossians 1:27).

- Jesus said, *I am the gate, whoever enters through me will be saved.*
- Jesus said, *I go to prepare a place for you and I will come again to take you to myself, that where I am you may also be.*
- Jesus also said, *no one comes to the Father accept through me* (John 10:9, 14:3,6).

Our only hope of salvation is not based on a life of trying to be good, or in keeping the law, but solely upon our love of and faith in the person of Jesus Christ "our hope." Which apparently is what some who would be teachers in Ephesus had forgotten. And that is what this opening section of Timothy's letter is all about.

We are not sure exactly what these false teachers were teaching; Paul describes them as *without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions* (vs.7). So they have combined ignorance with arrogance, which is always a deadly mix for people on both sides of whatever they are mixing up. But we can guess, since the Church in Galatia had a similar problem of false teachers coming

along behind Paul and trying to add works (Jewish traditions) into the gospel message, that the same thing was happening here (c.f. Galatians 5:13-23).

Because, as Paul writes that by now we should understand, **the only use of the law is to show us that we are sinful and to restrain those who would sin. NO one proves their holiness, or assures their salvation simply by obeying the law.**

As Paul wrote,

the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for father strikers and mother strikers, for murderers, fornicators, man-bedders [sodomites], slave-traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching ... of the glorious gospel.

Now did you notice from this startling list of "bad people," that they are basically examples of people who are doing that which is prohibited by the Ten Commandments? (Deuteronomy 5:6-21)

- *The Godless, and unholy,* ignore the first two commands to honor God alone and to make no idols.
- *The profane* daily break the third prohibition against abusing God's name.
- The fifth command is the only one that comes with a condition: "*honor your father and mother so that your life may be long and it will go well for you.*" Both in Israel past and still with God, striking one's parents is considered a capital offence.
- The sixth command against murder is universal in all but the most deviant of cultures.
- The seventh command against *adultery* covers both fornication and sodomy.
- Then there is the eighth command against theft of any kind ... what is more precious that you could steal from anyone but their life by enslaving them. That is why Paul named them "man stealers."
- And finally the ninth command is against bearing false witness, of which lying and perjury are still a part.

The only broken command examples Paul left out of this list were **coveting** and **not honoring the Sabbath**, which I wish he had included. Because when you think about it, these are two commands that our culture not only intentionally breaks but would teach us to do the same. Is not **consumerism**, "*keeping up with the Joneses*," and the entire Christmas shopping season just an institutionalized form of coveting? And the way we pursue such life by neglecting the Sabbath for more important recreational or shopping demands, which makes others work on the Sabbath to satisfy our demands, has that not once again made us slaves, this time not of Egyptian masters but our own appetites.

But back to the list, notice that it is “bad people” who do these bad things, *the lawless and disobedient, the godless and sinful, the unholy and profane*, not the “innocent,” people which is how Paul describes those who have come to Christ by faith.

Now I am sure that you have never thought of yourself as “innocent,” but realize that through faith in Christ, this is now your legal standing before God. Remember it was the Old Testament God who promised, *though your sins are as scarlet they shall be white as snow*, and *as far as the east is from the west so far has He removed our sins from us* (Isaiah 1:18, 55:9). And it is Jesus Christ who brought these promises to pass in our lives.

So if you have now come to God in faith, you are legally innocent – not guilty of sin – before Him. And having come to God in faith and if you now love God and seek to live for His glory – as sound doctrine should be teaching you, then “innocent” also describes your daily life as you grow a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. In this world, what a wonderful life it can be to live **innocent**.

Yes the law is still in force, but if you are “innocent,” loving God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and your neighbor equally, then you have risen so far above the strictures of the Ten Commandments that you are no longer in danger of breaking this basic moral code; it no longer touches your daily life; as Jesus said if you wholly love God and your neighbor as well, then you will automatically fulfill all God’s commands.

Innocent doesn’t mean that you have stopped sinning. We all struggle with daily temptations to tell a little lie, to be angry and unforgiving, to covet that which is beyond us. But innocent people, quickly confess such sins and move on. As one Christian said, *before I came to faith in Christ, I was an unforgiven sinner intentionally running towards sin. Now I am a forgiven sinner intentionally running away from sin. And that makes all the difference in the world and in the way I now live* (author unknown).

If you have ever seen any of the “Pirates of the Caribbean” movies, you know that Captain Jack Sparrow is a person who is both proud of and obsessed with being a pirate; lying, robbing, killing, doing whatever he needs to do to find fame, fortune, and to live forever as a pirate (strangely these movies are very funny). Part of the comedy is that Jack’s occasional moments of good-heartedness usually cause another’s happiness rather than his own. But as Jack also wisely pointed out to Elizabeth Swan, the heroine, that anyone who ruthlessly follows their own desires – whatever else they pretend to be – are actually by definition: pirates.



To help Jack succeed in his pirating ventures, he possesses a magic compass that points not to the North, but to whatever he happens to want most at the moment; sometimes it’s a pretty girl, more times it’s a bottle of Rum, but most of the time it points towards the next prize that he is after; which

interestingly he seldom ever succeeds in getting. My point being, the loveable rogue that he may be, Jack is a person living below the law, breaking most of God's moral commands on a daily basis; both his internal and his magic compass only pointing to his next desire. Should you or I come into possession of that compass, as an **innocent** person living in and for the love of God, that compass should always be pointing us back to Him.

Which way does your compass point these days?

Which brings us back to having a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith; these are not really separate components that we achieve in succession, but rather a complete package; as you pursue one you also get the others. So let's start with **sincere faith**, because that is where we all begin our Christian life.

It is our recognition of and sorrow over our sinfulness that leads us to seek a savior, to accept the forgiveness Jesus offers, and to trust him to bring us to Heaven when we die. **That is where our faith begins, but it desperately needs to grow from there!**

So as we sit under knowledgeable teachers who rightly handle God's word, we grow in our own knowledge of who God is and how He cares for all aspects of our life – this is what Paul means by *divine training*, we eventually learn to trust him with every single day of our life; "by faith" becomes the way we live our daily lives. That is what Paul means by **sincere faith**. It is a faith uncompromised by doubts, or self-promoting schemes, that is wholly reliant on God both for our daily bread and the life everlasting.

So choose your teachers wisely. Test the sincerity of their faith against your growing knowledge of God's word. Because false teachers, as Paul described them, arrogantly ignorant of what God's word actually teaches, still to this day lead many unquestioning believers in the wrong direction; these teachers are some of Satan's more powerful servants (c.f. 2Corinthians 11:14-15).

Then, as your sincere faith grows to encompass every aspect of your life – the bad days and well as the good ones – and as God's Word activated by the indwelling Holy Spirit begins to show you other sins that need to be removed from your life, then your actions and thoughts become more in line with those of Jesus your savior; your heart, your motives, your thoughts and intentions, become more and more pure. **That is what Paul means by a pure heart: our thoughts and life becoming consistently holy and God honoring as we are transformed and renewed in our thinking** – again under the guidance of Godly teachers.

Which brings us at last to a **good conscience**. Our conscience is our innate God-given ability to make moral judgments. It does not tell us what is right or wrong, but on the basis of what we have been taught, it discerns whether or not a particular moral choice is in line with what we believe. Both non-Christians and Christians have a conscience and both at times may be good or bad depending on what they have been taught.

Which means that well intentioned otherwise “good” people who are ignorant of what is right can follow their conscience to do the wrong thing; as exemplified by the mass of young people these days, even Christians, who decide to live together before marriage. Their love is sincere, their intentions are often noble, but they have never been taught the vital reasons of keeping marriage within the covenantal relationship for which God designed it. Thus the current absence of good Christian moral education that is shaping our modern culture has brought many otherwise good people back to the days of the Old Testament Judges, where the rarity of God’s Word has left them only to *do what is right in their own eyes*. (Judges 17:6, 21:25). A good conscience has been a Biblically trained conscience.

But, I must point out that this is also why different Christians – depending on what they have been taught – can both have good consciences even though they come to different conclusions on matters of food, clothing, entertainment (c.f. Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 8, 10). So Christians of good conscience can come to different conclusions. But the basic Christian teaching on the use of your conscience is that when you are in doubt, Don’t. Here is Paul’s wisdom on how to handle a conflict of conscience.

But those who have doubts
are condemned if they eat,
because they do not act from faith;
for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.
Romans 14:23

So what is our take-home from today. There are several lessons we should remember.

1. Christianity does not stop the moment we are saved. We are born-again into God’s family as new-born spiritual babies in desperate need of nurture by Godly teachers so that we may grow up and into a sincere faith, love from a pure heart, and a good conscience.
2. We should also watch out for those who would teach us that a godly life can be achieved any other way.
3. Sharing the Gospel with our world is a direct command to us coming both from God our savior and Jesus our Hope!
4. Lastly, I don’t know about you, but living in hope, loving with a pure heart, having a good conscience, and a sincere faith, sounds like a most wonderful way to live and worth our effort to seek with all our heart.

STUDY GUIDE FOR Lessons in Leadership 1: 1 Timothy 1:1-11 (Galatians 5:13-23)
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1. Since Galatians 5:13-23 is a parallel passage on what it means to live by the Love of God and others, rather than the law. Take time to read and discuss this passage.
 - a. Verse 1 says we were called to “freedom” and not to get re-entangled in the “yoke of slavery.” What enslaving yoke is Paul referring to? (*trying to be justified before God by the law – as exemplified by circumcision – as opposed to trusting in the righteousness provided by faith in Christ*).
 - b. Here Paul lists “loving your neighbor” (to which earlier Jesus had also listed “loving God”), how does this lifestyle “sum up” the whole law (vs. 14).
 - c. Verse 18 says that if you are led by the Spirit you will not be subject to the law. How does obeying the Spirit keep you from breaking the law?

2. According to our Timothy passage, the aim of “divine instruction” is that we develop *love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith*.
 - a. What might be the difference between love coming for a pure heart and that coming from an impure heart? *Use Paul’s description of divine love in 1 Corinthians 13 to guide this discussion.*
 - b. The sermon talked both about people being misled by an untrained conscience (i.e. people living together before marriage). And also people having a good conscience but coming to different conclusions on minor matters of faith (i.e. food prohibitions, clothing styles, alcohol, tobacco, holy days). It also gave a fairly detailed description on what the conscience does for us: *Our conscience is our innate God-given ability to make moral judgments. It does not tell us what is right or wrong, but on the basis of what we have been taught, it discerns whether or not a particular moral choice is in line with what we believe.* **How do you think our conscience grows and changes as we grow in faith?**
 - c. Also note that there is a rule that guides your conscience when you are in doubt. **Romans 14:23** says that if we act with doubt it is a sin. Why does doubting, make an action sinful for us.

3. Finally Discuss what your life might look like if you always had a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.