

06

SESSION SIX

The Gospel Calls for Obedience

SESSION SUMMARY

This session covers significant themes regarding pastors found in key excerpts from Paul's Pastoral Epistles. God uses pastors to lead His people in obedience to His Word. Reading through the Pastoral Epistles helps God's people learn to obey His call to pray for and support the pastors He has given to lead us in our mission of making disciples.

SCRIPTURE

1 Timothy 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-8; Titus 2:11-14

THE POINT

God uses pastors to lead His church in obedience to His Word.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Good leaders are essential in all organizations. Schools need principals. Governments need presidents or prime ministers. Teams need coaches. Businesses need CEOs. Marching bands need directors. Armies need generals. Churches need pastors.

- **What are some qualities and characteristics of good leaders?**
- **If someone asked you to describe the pastor's work, what would you say?**

The Bible takes the role and responsibilities of those in church leadership quite seriously. The apostle Paul went to great lengths in laying out what those qualifications and responsibilities look like in his letters to Timothy and Titus. However, while these character traits may be specific to leadership within the church, they should be true of all Christians, no matter their role within the church.

Option 2

Ask students to think of all the pastors at the church or any other pastors or ministry leaders they may know. Write out each name on a separate index card, along with the leader's role in the church. Place students into groups of three to four and give each group the same amount of index cards. Then instruct students to pray for the following for each of the leaders their group received:

- Pray for the pastors/leaders to follow God above all.
- Ask God to strengthen the pastors/leaders' relationships with their family and friends.
- Pray for mentors in similar roles to come alongside the pastors/leaders to encourage them.
- Ask God to increase the pastors/leaders' wisdom and knowledge of Him.
- Pray that God would help these pastors to walk in obedience to Him and to become better leaders.

Pastors and church leaders do not have easy jobs. They need people to encourage them, to speak truth into their lives, and to pray for them.

- **Today, we prayed for some pastors/church leaders. What are some other ways you can support and encourage these people this week?**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

God uses pastors to lead His church in obedience to His Word.

CHARACTERS

- **Paul:** former persecutor who became a Christ-follower and apostle to the Gentiles
- **Timothy and Titus:** two young pastors who were apprentices of the apostle Paul

PLOT

Most of us reading this won't go into full-time, vocational ministry. In other words, being a pastor or minister on staff at a church likely won't be the way we make a living. So why bother ourselves with these three letters that are called the pastoral epistles (1 Tim.; 2 Tim.; and Titus)? The reason is quite simple: The things Paul taught to this young man named Timothy aren't just for those in church leadership, but for all Christians everywhere.

TIMELINE

LETTERS TO YOUNG PASTORS

Paul instructs Timothy and Titus.

CO-HEIRS WITH CHRIST

Benefits of being adopted through Christ

FELLOWSHIP WITH BELIEVERS

Believers love one another as God has loved us.

PASTORS SHOULD SET AN EXAMPLE

Timothy was a younger pastor in the early stages of continuing a vibrant ministry. Timothy would soon take over the leadership from the apostle Paul who sought to encourage his son in the faith for the pastoral calling God placed on Timothy's life. Paul's instructions to Timothy—and to all pastors who came after him—remind us of both the awesome responsibility and great privilege pastors have shepherding a flock in the local church.

¹¹ Command and teach these things. ¹² Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. ¹³ Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. ¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. ¹⁵ Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. ¹⁶ Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Tim. 4:11-16)

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

In our passage, Paul instructed Timothy to command others (v. 11). This doesn't mean Timothy—or pastors who follow—were to be yelling orders like a general to his troops. Instead, "command" refers to the confidence Timothy needed in his role as pastor, and in saying this, Paul likely recognized Timothy's nervousness about the task ahead. Like Timothy, pastors shouldn't beat up on their people with the Word, but they shouldn't be timid in declaring God's truth either. The God who called Timothy gives commands, not suggestions, and Paul urged Timothy to challenge those he taught to obey the Lord. "These things" refers specifically to the items Paul cited in the previous verses, but would extend to the faithful teaching of all the Word.

Paul listed what was supposed to mark Timothy's ministry (vv. 12-16). First, Timothy was to set an example. A major way pastors lead churches to grow is through the examples they set. Although Timothy may have been considered a younger leader, his age didn't prevent him from setting an example to the churches.

Throughout Scripture, God often used young people at strategic times: Joseph, Samuel, David, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Esther offer only a few of the many Old Testament examples. Paul exhorted Timothy not to be concerned about his age or how others might treat him due to his youth, but to focus on living an exemplary life. Timothy's life needed to be a pattern of a life given to Christ.

In what ways was Timothy supposed to be an example? He was an example outwardly in speech and in conduct. Speech would of course include clearly communicating the Word of God, but Paul meant much more. Paul wanted Timothy to be known for wise words rather than harsh rants. Today, this could include refusing to post outrage on social media, choosing instead to speak words of grace and compassion, and so on. Paul also encouraged Timothy to set an example inwardly through building traits of love, faith (or faithfulness), and purity (both sexual and general integrity).

- **What are some ways you personally could choose to follow the advice Paul gave to Timothy in these verses?** (*p. 46, PSG*)

PASTORS SHOULD FAITHFULLY TEACH THE WORD

It's one thing to faithfully proclaim God's Word even when you are young; it's another thing to do so when it is costly. But Paul knew that time was coming, so he continued:

¹ I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. ⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. (2 Tim. 4:1-8)

Employing athletic and military metaphors, Paul reminded Timothy it's not how you start in ministry but how you finish that matters most. Paul fought the good fight, he finished the race, and he kept the faith. Don't get confused by Paul's use of metaphors here. He was not calling for needless arguing with people in the church or giving permission for fist fights! Pastors should not be theological snobs who believe rightly but are jerks about it when preaching, teaching, and talking with others.

Instead, Paul called on Timothy to have clear conviction of faithful doctrine. Teaching the Word means we don't have a choice to waver in our convictions when they conflict with popular ideas in culture. For example, Jesus is not *a* way to God. Jesus is *the* only way to God. This is God's good and great plan. We don't get to choose which convictions to stand on based on their popularity. Some things are worth standing for, fighting for, and even dying for. That is what Paul wanted Timothy to understand and do.

Olympic athletes train, compete, and sacrifice for years to be able to represent their country. Some only compete in a race that literally lasts seconds. So why the sacrifice? There is a level of honor and satisfaction the years they trained reward them with the title of *Olympian*. However, pastors serve Jesus and the church their entire lives. They serve so sacrificially and joyfully because they know a crown of righteousness far greater than Olympic gold awaits. They know that, rather than standing on a podium to receive their awards, they will have the honor of kneeling and offering it to the King of kings.

PASTORS POINT PEOPLE TO CHRIST

Paul encouraged Titus about a pastor's work the same way he encouraged Timothy. Paul gave Titus practical instructions for how to teach others to live consistently with sound teaching throughout the first ten verses of chapter 2. Beginning in verse 11, Paul took Titus back to the doctrinal basis for the reason we live the way he described.

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. (Titus 2:11-14)

Paul first reminded Titus of a fundamental conviction of Scripture—the belief that all are accepted by God through faith in Jesus. Scripture clearly indicates the requirement of faith in salvation and the danger of unbelief. What this means is that salvation is available to all who believe—no matter their ethnicity, social status, language, or any other factor.

The gospel carries with it both negative and positive aspects. The gospel encourages us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts—negative commands. In other words, we will spend half our time staying out of trouble. The grace of God reminds us God's way is better than any of our worldly, fleshly, sinful desires no matter how appealing they may seem. However, because of Jesus, we can deny godlessness and worldly lusts, but we can go even further and live in a way that is sensible—positive gifts. Christianity is true—and that is enough—but Christianity also works. Christianity is truly the best way to live. Because of Jesus' work to save us, the Spirit within us empowers us to make sensible choices each day. In Christ, not only have we been given His perfect righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21), but we also have the power to live righteously as He changes and empowers us.

TIMELINE

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Works of the flesh versus the fruit of the Spirit

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Standing firm with the armor of God

GENEROUS LIVING

A model and motivation for generosity

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Inspiration of Scripture (p. 47, PSG)

The inspiration of Scripture refers to God directing the Bible's human authors as they composed and recorded His message to humankind in their original writings (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21). Occasionally this inspiration was achieved through dictation, meaning God spoke directly to the original authors. However, this inspiration came most often through the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit and personalities of the authors so that their writings can be considered the very words of God.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Near the end of his life Paul wrote letters to Timothy and Titus, two of his most trusted children in the faith. Paul instructed them to follow the model of the Good Shepherd—Jesus—who guides His people into the knowledge of truth. Because Jesus died to serve the church, pastors and leaders are called to live to serve the church.

YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **What are some ways we can faithfully call on others to obey God's commands without sounding harsh or timid?** *The tone we use is very important, as is genuinely showing others that we care for them and are looking out for what's best for them. In addition to how we speak, we should focus on what we say and the language we use. In other words, we don't need to list things they should be doing or avoiding; instead, we invite them into a conversation where we can graciously and lovingly speak God's truth into their lives.*
- **How have you been corrected or encouraged by a pastor or leader that proved helpful?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What are some of the theological convictions that are becoming more difficult for us to hold faithfully in our culture?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How should remembering the gospel change the way we live each day in our homes, schools, neighborhoods, and beyond?** *Part of the gospel includes our future state and resurrection. When we live our daily lives with the constant reminder of what one day will be, we are motivated in the present to live in a way that reflects our future reality.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION

10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

Paul instructed Timothy to continue to grow as a believer (1 Tim. 4:15-16). These instructions apply to both pastors and us. “Practice these things” (v. 15) carries the idea of a consistent routine. Paul exhorted Timothy to develop healthy routines and follow them, which is something we should all be doing as we seek to grow and mature in our walk with Christ.

- **How can we relate Paul’s instructions to Timothy to our lives, even if we are not pastors?**
We should also set an example to those around us in the areas Paul lists and practice spiritual disciplines in order to grow and mature in our faith, and so on.
- **What are some ways we can encourage our pastor(s) and leaders as they lead out in practicing spiritual disciplines?** *One way to encourage them would be to follow their example. Another way would be to tell them how their example encourages you in your own practice of spiritual disciplines.*



HEART

We can live godly lives, even now, knowing this life is not the end. There is a blessed hope in the restoration of all things, a hope that is grounded in Jesus who is God, Savior, and Redeemer. Jesus redeems us from lawlessness, so we can deny godlessness and lusts and live doing good works that bring God glory. To be clear, we don’t do good works to earn anything from God; we can’t earn anything from Him! We do good works because the transforming work of the Spirit changes our nature (2 Cor. 5:16-17), creating a new heart in us that is eager to do good works out of gratitude.

- **What are some personal challenges in your daily life that distract you from pursuing godliness?** *Answers may include relationships, social media, entertainment, and so on.*
- **How should Christ’s return and future redemption of all things frame how we live now?**
We should live in light of Jesus’ future return, and try to mirror that future reality in the present.



HANDS

God uses pastors to model God’s Word for the church, proclaim God’s Word to the church, and call on us to submit to God’s Word under the authority and leadership of Christ. While pastors are a blessing from God to the church, the church should also strive to be a blessing to their pastors as we seek to love, encourage, pray for, and support them. Take time this week to consider how you can encourage your pastor(s) and leaders in the church and pour into them as they pour into you.

- **What are some ways you can serve the pastors and leaders of your church in the coming weeks?** *Pray for them, encourage them, give them your attention, and so forth.*
- **How have the pastors and leaders in your church encouraged you to follow Christ?**
Answers will vary.

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack items #8, #9, #10, which contain informational posters on the following books: 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. You can also refer students to pack item #11, which contains a quote poster related to the session.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPSPR18Letters)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at
GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit
MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject