

OpenTheo

1 Timothy: Chapter-by-Chapter Commentary

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Transcript

The book of 1 Timothy is the first of what have been called the pastoral epistles, including 1 and 2 Timothy and the book of Titus. The status of these books has been considerably debated. Some have argued that they are 2nd century texts, what are called pseudepigraphical texts, presenting themselves as being written by the apostle, but actually written by other hands.

Various arguments have been advanced for this position. Some have argued that after the Second Coming failed to occur in the 1st century, there was a need for a more accommodated Christianity for the longer term, and the pastoral epistles answer to something of this concern. They address structures of church leadership, which are largely absent in the undisputed Pauline texts.

Jugentile issues are no longer looming in the same way in the background. The style of the letters also seem to differ quite considerably from that of the undisputed Pauline texts. And besides this, there is the challenge of fitting them into the chronology that we know of Paul from the book of Acts and his other epistles.

Many of the challenges to Pauline authorship rest upon questionable theological prejudices. The assumption, for instance, that the apostolic church was a far less organised body, with more charismatic structures of leadership. Others imagine that some later figure lost the nerve that Paul had in his more radical teaching, retreating to the more patriarchal form of society that we see in chapter 2. Many of these sorts of challenges can be answered by showing the consistency between Paul's teaching in the books of Timothy and Titus, and the teaching that we find elsewhere in the Pauline epistles and in the book of Acts.

The claim that it is a late text, and the fact that it is absent from Marcion's canon, can be addressed by recognising that Marcion may have had motivations for leaving it out of his canon, which had more to do with his heretical convictions than with strong arguments against the authenticity of the pastoral epistles. Besides this, the pastoral epistles are recognised as genuine Pauline epistles from at least the beginning of the 2nd century. The fact that they are cited by various people and attributed to Paul leaves those disputing Pauline authorship with the challenge of explaining why they became so widely accepted from so very early on.

Various responses have been given to the challenge of contrasting styles between the pastoral epistles and the undisputed Pauline texts. It is worth bearing in mind, for instance, the fact that various other hands were involved in the writing of the Pauline epistles. All scholars accept, for instance, the role of an amanuensis in the writing of many of Paul's epistles.

Then there is the consideration of co-authors in a number of cases. In reference to the pastoral epistles, I. Howard Marshall has raised the possibility of what he calls allonymity, another hand gathering together, organising and editing genuine Pauline material into these letters. If we accept, as I believe we should, that the apostle Paul was the author of the pastoral epistles, we are left with a number of challenges, one of them being the question of where to fit these in within Paul's ministry as we can piece it together from various other sources, particularly the book of Acts.

Philip Towner suggests that one of the most promising junctures is that found in Acts

chapter 20 verses 1 to 3. After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. There he spent three months and when a plot was made against him by the Jews, as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.

I think Towner is right to identify this brief window of time as the most likely period for the writing of 1 Timothy. The epistle of 1 Timothy begins with a characteristically Pauline introduction. Paul introduces himself and declares his commission.

He is an apostle of Christ Jesus, by command of God our Saviour and of Christ Jesus our hope. The letter is addressed to Timothy, Paul's true child in the faith. Paul first encountered Timothy at Lystra.

He was held in high esteem by the Christians in the region. He was the son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father. This would likely have provoked some disapproval in some more observant Jewish quarters, although many of the Jews would have been more relaxed about it.

The problem was not chiefly an ethnic one, but a religious one. Intermarriage with people outside of the covenant was seen as a very serious matter in many parts of the Old Testament. In 2 Timothy 1.5 we learn that both Timothy's mother and grandmother were faithful persons and that he was taught the scriptures from a young age.

So we should not suppose that Timothy's mother was indifferent towards her Jewish faith. We can speculate over whether or not Timothy's father was a God-fearer associated with the synagogue. However, the fact that Timothy had not been circumcised raises the possibility that his mother's marriage was less than ideal.

Perhaps it was arranged by an unbelieving father. Timothy's religious status would have seemed rather ambiguous and perhaps a cause of scandal to some people. Timothy himself is a living example of a Jew-Gentile union.

And considering the obstacle that Timothy's ambiguous status might provide for the mission, Paul had determined it was best to circumcise him. This presumably was undertaken for the cause of the mission, so that Timothy would be more effective in Jewish contexts. In circumcising Timothy, Paul played the part of a father to him.

Timothy would come to be immensely important in Paul's later ministry. He served as Paul's personal representative. Timothy is Paul's shaliyach, the one who personally represents Paul where Paul himself could not be.

As such, Timothy participated in the exercise of Paul's apostolic ministry. He was the co-author of a number of epistles. 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, Philemon.

He was Paul's personal emissary, as we see in Acts 19, verse 22, and here in 1 Timothy. He also served Paul so that Paul could give himself to his primary task of preaching without any distraction, as we see in Acts 18, verses 1-5. Paul and Timothy were a pair, bound together in a single apostolic mission.

On occasions, the distinction between them is made plain. Only Paul is the apostle proper. While on other occasions, their alignment is stressed.

Timothy is a co-worker, a helper, a sharer in Paul's calling. Relative to the churches to which they were ministering, Timothy was to be treated as a bearer of Paul's own authority. However, relative to Paul, Timothy was a subordinate.

He was without an independent commission of his own. He rather shared in Paul's. The relationship between Paul and Timothy is exceptionally close, and Paul speaks of Timothy as his son, his child in the gospel.

The language is not merely that of emotional closeness, but of representation. The son represents the father, his authority, his presence and his interests. Such father-son language also points to a relationship similar to that which pertained between Old Testament leaders and prophets and their shaliyaks.

In Numbers, chapter 13, verse 16, we see that Joshua's name was given to him by Moses, who also laid his hands on Joshua in Deuteronomy, chapter 34, verse 9. A similar relationship existed between Elijah and Elisha. Elisha received a double portion of Elijah's spirit, the inheritance that was appropriate to the firstborn. And as Elijah was taken into heaven, Elisha addressed him as his father.

Matthew Colvin observes that Timothy is a virtual copy of Paul, as underlined by 1 Corinthians, chapter 4, verses 16-17. I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

The charge to imitate Paul is accompanied by the sending of Timothy toward the fulfilment of this end, as the son is the pre-eminent imitator and representation of the father. As a participant in his father's ministry, and as Paul's right hand man, Timothy had immense authority to wield, even being given the commission to choose and appoint church officers as Paul's representative. As the apostolic ministry was temporary, upon Paul's death, Timothy would likely have ceased to be the apostle's apostle, and would presumably have become a bishop, or occupied some other similar position within the early church.

The greeting that Paul gives to Timothy here is grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. Throughout the Pauline corpus, we see that the terms grace, mercy and peace are theologically freighted terms. They bear the greatest weight

of meaning.

This is not just a throwaway greeting, but is a communication of the full wealth of the blessings that are given to us in the gospel. This epistle is sent to Timothy to confirm him in an existing commission. While going on to Macedonia, Paul had commissioned Timothy to remain at Ephesus and deal with some issues in the church there.

As I've suggested earlier, this was most likely at the beginning of Acts chapter 20. Ephesus was a sizeable city, probably larger than Corinth, perhaps even the third or fourth largest city in the Roman Empire. Paul first visited there in Acts chapter 18.

There were certain troublemakers in the church at Ephesus. They seemed to have been teachers teaching false doctrine, a teaching based upon speculation and esoteric texts and beliefs, rather than upon the clarity of the gospel message and the faith that corresponds to that. Timothy and Paul had the task of stewardship in the household of God, and the proper behaviour of people within the household of faith was threatened by such speculative doctrines.

The source of the speculative doctrines in question seemed to have been Jewish myths and fables. The endless genealogies referred to suggest that some of the material might have arisen from speculative Jewish texts about people before the flood, for instance. Such material can be read with interest, but it mostly produces dubious lines of reasoning, rather than the certainty and the clarity of true faith.

There are definitely interesting features to be pursued in the shadowy corners of the biblical text, and even in the penumbra of extra-canonical Jewish literature, there are many worthwhile things to be read. However, this is certainly not where our faith is founded. Our faith must rest upon the clear revealed things of God, and the more that we abandon that clarity for speculations and fables, the more we are in danger of undermining our own and other people's faith.

The centre of gravity of Christian teaching is in clearly revealed things, things that any careful reader of scripture should be able to see. These things encourage faith, which is based upon the surety and the clarity of truth. Myths and speculations cannot provide a sure foundation for such faith.

Such true faith gives rise to a genuine love. The conscience and the heart that have been purified by faith and the work of the Holy Spirit yield love towards God and his people that fulfils the law. Meanwhile, those who have abandoned the clarity of the word of God in the gospel, and implicitly the faith and love that correspond to that, have given themselves to interminable vain discussion, empty speculations about the law.

They fancy themselves to be teachers of the law, but they don't have a clue what they're talking about. Paul here might be speaking not just as a Christian apostle, but also as

someone who was advanced in the knowledge of the law more than any of his contemporaries. Paul was enough of an actual expert in the law to recognise dabblers when he saw them.

The law is fulfilled in love that proceeds from a true faith that responds to the clarity of the gospel. Paul writes in Romans chapter 13 verses 8 to 10, The law, Paul stresses here, is good, but it needs to be used in the right way. The law is primarily for the condemning and the exposure of sin, and as such it's not primarily for the just, but for rebels and sinners.

Paul lists a number of figures for which the law is written in verses 9 to 10, and we can see he loosely follows the order of the Ten Commandments. The lawless, disobedient, ungodly, sinners, unholy and profane refer to the first four commandments, then there are those who strike their fathers and mothers, which relates to the fifth, those who are murderers, the sixth, the sexually immoral and men who practice homosexuality, the seventh, enslavers, you shall not steal, the eighth, liars and perjurers, the ninth. There is no explicit allusion to the tenth.

Elsewhere in Romans, Paul talked about the tenth commandment as that which exposed sin to him. The tenth commandment, which reveals the problem of the heart, is also the negative commandment that most clearly corresponds to the positive injunction by which the law is fulfilled, loving your neighbour as yourself. The law for Paul represents the sort of negative space around the positive space of the gospel message.

The law is concerned with ruling out and identifying everything that is contrary to sound doctrine. However, the positive message of the sound doctrine is found in the gospel of the glory of the blessed God. The gospel is that in which God's actual glory is revealed.

In these verses, Paul makes a lot of use of faith-related words. The word entrusted in verse 11, the word faithful in verse 12, the word faith in verse 14, the word trustworthy in verse 15 and the verb to believe in verse 16. All of these are related in the Greek.

Paul has been commissioned as one faithful to bear the gospel. The faithfulness of Paul here should be considered as the effectiveness of Christ through him. And the contrast between the former Paul, Saul of Tarsus, prior to his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, and Paul the Apostle is a stark one.

It presents Paul himself as a worked example of Christ's grace in the gospel. Paul both bears the message and represents the message in himself. As a recipient of such extreme mercy, he is well-placed to declare that mercy to others and also to provide an image of what that mercy is like in practice.

He presents himself as the foremost of sinners. But as the foremost of the sinners, he has been made an example of the extent of Christ's salvation. If the foremost of the

sinner, a violent man who persecuted the church, can be saved, then there is no reason why anyone else can't be.

Paul's personal testimony is thoroughly bound up with his broader message of the gospel. Paul concludes this section with a doxology, proclaiming God's reign, the fact that he is the immortal creator beyond human vision, the only God who dwells in unapproachable light, and one who will receive honour and glory throughout all generations. From a declaration of what God has done in history, and most particularly in his own life, the Apostle moves quite seamlessly to a proclamation of God's eternal glory.

A question to consider. Paul's personal testimony here is very naturally connected to his proclamation of the gospel more generally. How can we tell our testimonies in a way that connects them more fully with the great story of God's work in Christ and history? In 1 Timothy 1, verse 18, we move into Paul's instructions to Timothy.

Paul had left Timothy at Ephesus with instructions to sort out some of the issues in the church there. At a number of points in the book of Acts, we have descriptions of prophecies made concerning particular persons. Verse 18 suggests that certain prophecies had been made concerning Timothy.

In his present commission in Ephesus, he would have the opportunity to fulfil some of these prophecies. As a soldier might be charged by his commander, he is charged by Paul to wage the good warfare. Elsewhere in the Pauline epistles, we see Paul using the imagery of warfare, and speaking of the armour of God that those waging it must wear.

Here there is no such elaboration of the imagery, although he does single out faith and a good conscience, both of which he referenced earlier in the chapter in verse 5. The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. The failure to maintain these two crucial things have been the cause of the devastation of a number of people's faith, in particular Hymenaeus and Alexander who are singled out here. These two figures seem to have been excommunicated by Paul, which is most likely what handing over to Satan means in verse 20.

There is a reference to Alexander the coppersmith in 2 Timothy 4, verse 14, and there is another reference to an Alexander in Acts chapter 19, but it is by no means clear that these are the same person as the person described here with Hymenaeus. That these two individuals were delivered over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme, suggests to many that Paul's purpose in excommunication was remedial rather than punitive. Through their learning not to blaspheme, the hope would be that they would be restored to the company of the faithful, having learnt their lesson in time.

As a matter of primary importance, the first of all at the beginning of chapter 2, Paul wants Timothy to ensure that prayers are made for all sorts of persons. He uses four different terms for prayer here, supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings.

The first three terms seem to be largely overlapping in meaning, so perhaps we should not look for some great distinction between these different types of prayer.

However, the multiplication of words for prayer suggests perhaps the importance of the activity. The prayers must be offered for all persons, and here it is kings and those in high positions that are singled out. The aim of such prayer is that the Christians may live peaceful and quiet lives.

Christians are supposed to be good citizens, invested in the good of their nation, wanting to uphold what is righteous and true, and desiring authorities to act against evil. Such prayer is in many respects the Church's primary political task. Christians can often think about politics primarily about what the Church does outside in the world, but in the act of praying for our nations, we are going to the greatest throne of all, a throne to which we have special access through Christ.

The greatest political power that Christians possess is not in the ballot box, nor is it in lobby groups. Rather, it is in the act of prayer. Our primary concern in such prayer should be the good of our society, that kings and those in authority would perform their stewardship faithfully, in a manner that secures peace and quiet for all in the society.

Our ambition should be that of living peaceful, quiet, godly and dignified lives. Christians should desire a sort of respectability. Although we are at odds with our society's values in a great many ways, we should seek to be good neighbours and faithful citizens or subjects.

We don't want to have the reputation of being troublemakers, and wherever we can, we pray for the good of our societies and for their leaders. Christians ought not to be revolutionaries or malcontents. We should treat authorities with honour and respect, and lead lives that, as much as possible, allow us to be at peace with all men.

This posture in the society more generally, and this concern to pray for all sorts of persons, is a reflection of God's own attitude towards people. God's benevolence and goodness to all people, seen in the Gospel, is something that should be reflected in Christians' own social posture. In the Gospel we have a message of grace delivered to all peoples.

Persons of every tribe, tongue, people and nation receive this good news, which is an expression of God's good favour towards mankind in Christ Jesus. God is the one true God, and Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and man. There is no other.

The uniqueness of God, and this one mediator between God and man, is connected with a sense of the universality of the message of the Gospel. It is directed to all persons, in all stations of life, in every nation and people, and founded upon the sacrifice of Christ, which is for the sins of the entire world. No person receiving the message of Christ by

faith would discover that they had been uninvited.

This message of God's grace in Christ, going out to all of the nations, was revealed at the proper time. The wording here might bring to mind Titus 1, verses 2-3, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began, and at the proper time manifested in His word through the preaching, which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Saviour. In 1 Timothy 2 as well, Paul refers to his commissioning as an apostle to bear this message of the Gospel.

In bringing this Gospel message to all persons, to the Gentiles in particular, making prayer for all persons, and especially those responsible for the peace and well-being of Gentile societies, would be an important part of the witness that the Church would bear. The God that they are praying to is not just the God of the Jews, He is the God of all persons, and His desire is to form a new people from every nation under heaven. Continuing the theme of prayer, Paul now turns to the actual outworking of prayer within specific community contexts.

Here he is addressing church gatherings, presumably in house church contexts. Christians in a city like Ephesus would meet from house to house, with patrons providing a place in which an assembly could gather. There would have been several such communities within many cities.

Paul now turns to address the activities of these communities in ways that distinguish between the instructions given to men and to women. Men in particular here are charged with the task of prayer that Paul has mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and they are warned about the dangers of anger and quarrelling. The men are to live in harmony and at peace with each other.

The fact that they are charged to pray within these gatherings, in a way that distinguishes them from the women, should probably not be taken to mean that they were the only ones who would be praying. In 1 Corinthians chapter 11 we have references to women praying and prophesying in such gatherings. However, it likely means that they would be the ones leading in this particular activity.

There is a possible allusion here back to Malachi chapter 1 verse 11. The fact that they are praying this way in every place alludes to the universal scope of the gospel, in fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. That verse from Malachi reads, The concluding seven verses of 1 Timothy chapter 2, and verse 12 especially, are the site of some of the fiercest exegetical disagreements in the entire New Testament.

Indeed, there are entire books devoted to just these seven verses. They are bearing upon the question of women's place in Christian thought, makes them key for controversies on these matters more generally. A number of different approaches have been taken in understanding them.

Many have traditionally taken them as a reference to more general statements that Paul is making about the order of ministry within the church, straightforwardly backed up by a creational mandate. In more recent decades, many scholars have focused more narrowly upon a specific historical context that Paul is addressing, whether it's the wider context of his particular period in history, and the pragmatic concerns that that raises for the gospel, or whether it's a very specific context in the city of Ephesus. A number of scholars have suggested that in the city of Ephesus, in association with the worship of Artemis, there would have been a strong tradition of priestesses and women in religious leadership.

Others have focused more upon the phenomenon of the new Roman woman in the context of Ephesus, wealthy women who put themselves forward in a domineering fashion, who would dress immodestly and in an unchaste manner. Some of these scholars point to the ways in which this figure of the new Roman woman might have latched on to certain aspects of Paul's gospel message. The message of there being no male or female in Christ would have been an equalising message that would have been appealing to such Roman women.

The curse on Eve has been lifted, and now men and women can act on equal terms. This sort of aggressive new feminist movement would have been something that would have been a problem for the church within that particular context. Scholars who advance this position see these concerns lying behind Paul's instructions to women in this chapter.

Paul's concerns, for many of them, are seen largely as pragmatic, rather than matters of absolute principle. Some feminist scholars have seen Paul as abandoning his true principles at this point. They believe that he loses the nerve of teachings such as Galatians 3, verse 28, and surrenders to the old patriarchal order.

Others see it more as a curb upon the excesses of an extreme feminist movement and understand the terms of Paul's restrictions as cutting back on those excesses, rather than suggesting a more general submission of women to men. What Paul would be tackling here, then, is women giving false teaching, or domineering over a man, the alternative being a quieter approach, not necessarily complete silence. Some scholars who imagine a situation more particular to the city of Ephesus see Paul's restrictions here as contextually pragmatic.

For this period of time, Paul is not allowing women to teach or exercise authority over men, but if circumstances were to change, he would have no issue with it. Other scholars, like Andrew Perryman or Philip Towner, also see a pragmatic restriction here, but see this pragmatism extending a great deal further. The rise of women to leadership, for instance, requires more general education of women and a lot of other social changes that had not yet worked out within that context.

As with the institution of slavery, the Gospel sets a time bomb next to the submission of

women, but it will be many centuries before it truly explodes. In the meantime, and in keeping with Paul's desire that Christians live a peaceful, quiet, godly and dignified life, Christian women would have to accommodate themselves to the not-yet-of-their-cultures norms. There are a great many different questions that face the interpreter of this chapter.

We have to consider the background. What situation gives rise to Paul's teaching here? We need to consider the particular words that he uses. The term, for instance, translated to exercise authority over in the ESV, is one that has been greatly debated.

We need to consider the extent of Paul's prohibition. Is this just a temporary lack of permission, or is this a more universal and continuing restriction? What then are we to make of verses 13 to 15? Is the reference to creation grounding Paul's teaching in some creation mandate? Is it just illustrating his point with a specific story? Is it a more specific application? Or is it addressing a misreading of the story of Genesis, which was held by certain of the people in the church in Ephesus? All of these questions and considerations from various lines of interpretation have to be borne in mind as we work through this passage. It begins with a reference to the way that Christian women should dress.

Presumably the context and view here is especially that of gathered assemblies. Women are supposed to dress in a way that is modest and chaste, in a way that flaunts neither their wealth nor their sexuality. Decency and propriety seem to be important concerns for Paul here.

Christian women should be adorned by godliness, and they should also adorn the way of godliness in the way that they behave. Paul's teaching on this point here might remind us of Peter's teaching in 1 Peter 3, verses 3-5. The Christian woman is supposed to be characterized by self-control, by moderation and restraint.

By her dress, she should be able to communicate that she is a person of discretion and prudence. It is important when reading such passages to consider the sort of situations that Paul might have been addressing. This is perhaps a sort of shadow reading, reading the character of a situation or some opponents from the shadow that they cast upon the texts that are addressed to them.

One of the strengths of certain forms of the New Roman Women thesis is the way that they help us to understand why Paul is addressing these particular issues. The instructions concerning dress give the strong impression that Paul is addressing a situation where women might behave otherwise. The sort of women who would wear costly attire, jewels, braided hair and gold and pearls are the sort of women who would be well-to-do.

These would be wealthy women who presumably would be patronesses of the church. And in a context where the church largely met in a domestic setting, such women would

have quite a lot of influence. One could imagine a congregation hosted by such a wealthy woman where many of the men in the congregation, who would be outnumbered by the women perhaps, would be slaves or new believers.

In such a situation, it would be very easy for the woman who hosted the church as its patroness to come to exercise an excessive influence over others. As the church's associational identity across a city and between cities started to be built up, the influence of such women, which largely arose from the fact that the church was grounded at that point in a domestic context, rapidly diminished. These verses address the gathered assembly of the church, and in this context women are instructed to learn quietly with all submissiveness.

The submissiveness referred to here may be more specific to the context, not to men in general. It may be about being submissive to the order of the assembly. It is not the relationship of marriage or relationship to men in general that is being referred to.

Verse 12 should also be related to the same context. The teaching and exercising authority, or whatever that term means, concerns the appropriate behaviour of women in the assembly of the church. While it is not unrelated to the way that women and men should interact more generally, it speaks to a far more specific situation at this point.

Various translations of the term translated to exercise authority over in the ESV have been proposed. Many scholars have argued that it should be given a more negative tone, to assume authority, to usurp authority, or to domineer over. Others see it as referring to taking the initiative over men.

While this has bearing upon formal office within the church, it is not directly addressing formal office here. It seems to be speaking to more general behaviours. While many scholars have taken the teaching and the exercising authority to be interchangeable, the terms are distanced enough in the Greek to make this less likely.

Rather one may be a more specific example of the other. The teaching in question is not restricted to false teaching. If this were the issue, it seems unlikely that Paul would single out the women, nor speak of the women as a general group.

We should bear in mind, for instance, that Priscilla, of Priscilla and Quilla, had been in Ephesus, and she was clearly well instructed in the gospel. There is also the fact that many of the false teachers were men. Paul's concern then seems to be broader than merely the possibility that women might convey false teaching.

Also the teaching is specifically in relationship to exercising authority over a man. No such restriction is given for other women. The evidence, I think, seems to point in the direction of Paul making a more general statement about the proper relationship between men and women.

And this, I believe, is borne out in the verses that follow. The three verses with which the chapter ends refer back to the creation narrative. This is not the first time that Paul has used the creation narrative to make a point about the relationship between men and women.

In 1 Corinthians 11, verses 7-12, he writes, For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God. But woman is the glory of man, for man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.

That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, in the Lord, woman is not independent to man, nor man of woman. For as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman, and all things are from God.

In 1 Timothy 2, Paul references three key aspects of the creation and fall narratives. First of all, the order of the creation of Adam and Eve. Second, the different relationship that they had to the fall.

And then, although this is debated, the way that childbearing functions in the vocation of the woman after the fall. We should consider the way that Paul is giving a shorthand retelling of the creation and fall narratives, in a way that serves to support his point. By considering the story of Genesis chapter 2 and 3, we might be able to make more sense of the logic of his argument here.

In Genesis chapter 2, the man is created in response to a problem of the earth. The earth needs someone to till it, and the man is created for that specific task. He is trained for the task of exercising dominion over the world, in a very special way, prior to the creation of the woman.

He is placed in the garden, given the task of serving the garden, but also guarding and maintaining its boundaries. He is given the rule concerning the tree. The woman is not given that rule, rather she is given it second hand by the man.

By the time that the woman is created then, she is created as the helper of the man. The man has been given the fundamental vocation, and the woman comes alongside the man to complete what he starts. The point of the text is not that the man is over the woman or greater than the woman, but that the man comes first in his vocation.

One could see this, perhaps, as the man's task of establishing the foundations and guarding the boundaries. He is supposed to do the initial act of taming and mastering, and then the woman is supposed to glorify and fill those things with life. Her work is not less important, but it comes second.

The man has the leading role, and the leading role, if we consider, is not primarily

exercised relative to the woman. It is primarily exercised out into the world. This commission is given to the man before the woman is created.

When the woman is then created, she has to follow the man's lead, completing and glorifying what he has begun. Moving into the story of the fall, we can see similar patterns. It was the man that was given the instruction concerning the tree.

It was the man that was held responsible for the tree as well. Genesis chapter 3, verses 11 and 17 make clear that the man is held especially responsible. He is the one that was given the instruction.

He is the one held accountable when the commandment is broken. The woman had received the commandment concerning the tree second hand, from Adam, not directly from the Lord. As a result, she could be deceived in a way that he was not.

However, although Adam was not deceived, his wife played a very particular role in leading him astray. A wife, through the power that she has over the heart of her husband, can easily lead her husband astray. This is one of the reasons why the Lord's judgment upon Adam begins with the words, because you have listened to the voice of your wife.

The judgments upon the serpent and the woman also specifically speak to her activity of childbearing. Verses 15 and 16 of Genesis chapter 3. Putting all of these pieces together, how do they relate to Paul's argument? First of all, in the original creation, we see that the man was supposed to lead the way in the human vocation. He was supposed to guard the boundaries and lay the foundations.

It was Adam in particular that was given the task of guarding the garden, of maintaining the law concerning the tree and of teaching his wife concerning these things. Things went wrong when the woman took the initiative. The woman was deceived and she used her influence over her husband, even though he knew better, to lead him into transgression.

The question of whether Paul's argument depends upon a belief that women are more easily deceived in general is one that has given rise to great controversy. Many famous names in the history of the church have held such a position. Given their contexts, in times when women weren't educated to the same degree as men, their beliefs on this front may be somewhat more excusable.

Elsewhere in scripture, women are associated with wisdom, and women also shrewdly deceive many tyrants in ways that deliver poetic justice upon the serpent that once deceived Eve. The claim that Paul's argument is that women are less intelligent than men would seem to be quite unsustainable. It is possible, however, that Paul is making a more specific point here.

Guarding and upholding the boundaries of truth is not just about intelligence in general, but requires a particular sort of judgment that is more commonly found among men. The judgment in question is one that can put pity to one side, that is able to draw sharp distinctions, that contends for its own position and against opposing positions, and which tests things rigorously without being so susceptible to sentiment. Male groups, for instance, far more characteristically engage in vigorous stress-testing of ideas.

Men are treated as combatants in argument, and don't pull their punches with each other. There is much less likelihood of things becoming personal. When women enter the argument, however, men, on account of their uxoriousness, will often be excessively affirming of women's positions, or protect them from attack.

All of this compromises the capacity of such conversation to guard the boundaries that really matter. Besides this, when women are in the conversation, there is a lot more concern for sensitivity. And while those concerns are important, the more that the concern of sensitivity and empathy has driven the debates of the Church, the more that it is compromised with all sorts of modern errors and sins.

Adam wasn't deceived concerning the tree, but due to Eve's influence over him, he followed her nonetheless, never engaging his critical ability that could have protected them both. The implication is that by remaining silent, the women make it easier for the men in the Church to perform their proper task of establishing the foundations and guarding the boundaries of the truth of the Gospel. None of this should remotely entail the idea that women are to be inactive in the intellectual task of the Church.

The task of guarding the boundaries and establishing the foundations is only one part of a far greater duty. However, as women do become more prominent in this particular part of the Church's and society's task, we should not be surprised to see certain sort of deceptions take root. And we should be clear, this is not just because of women.

This is also because of men's appropriate desire to be obliging to women and not to attack them. It is very difficult for a man sharply, strongly and directly to challenge a woman. And as a result, some of the fundamental ways that the boundaries of truth are maintained within a society are compromised.

Paul was very concerned that this not happen in the context of the Church. 1 Timothy chapter 2 ends with a reference to childbearing. Indeed, some have seen it as a reference to the childbearing, the woman who bears the seed that will crush the serpent's head.

Most likely, this is a reference to the context in which most women would be living out their salvation. Childbearing comes with a blessing. It's not merely a context of judgment.

The Christian woman in such a Church who bears children and raises them is playing her part within the greater drama of salvation. She does not have to usurp the place of Adam to have that significance. Childbearing, so often marginalised in modern society, is by no means marginalised in Scripture.

So much of the Scriptural narrative is centred upon stories of women bearing children. The story of Sarah, the story of Rebecca, the story of Rachel and Leah, The story of the Exodus is told as a story of childbearing, beginning with Jehobah, the Hebrew midwives and the women of Israel. The story of the Kingdom begins with Hannah praying in the Temple.

The story of the Gospel begins with Mary and Elizabeth. While modern society privileges the activities of men, the Scripture sees the activity of women in bearing children as centre stage to all that's taking place. The entire story of Scripture can be told as the story of women struggling to give birth, all leading up to the great victory as the seed of the woman defeats the serpent.

A question to consider. If prayer is the primary political task of the Church, how can we commit ourselves to performing it more mindfully? 1 Timothy chapter 3 continues 1 Timothy chapter 2's concern with organisation of the life of the people of God in their congregations. More especially it speaks to the setting apart of persons to exercise specific roles within the Ephesian Church.

The roles mentioned in this chapter, the overseer and the deacons, have excited considerable debate over the centuries. As the proper manner of Church government has been a matter of dispute within and among denominations and different Christian traditions, the interpretation of passages like 1 Timothy chapter 3 has been a matter of great concern. In 1 Timothy chapter 3 we have a statement concerning the overseer.

We find a similar sort of statement in Titus chapter 1 verses 5 to 9. There are great similarities between these statements, but there are also some differences. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine, and also to rebuke those who contradict it. There are great similarities between these statements, but there are also some differences.

The overseer seems to be spoken of as a singular character, whereas the elders are spoken of in plural ways. It seems that the form of Church order within the early Church was something that was evolving over time, perhaps most notably after the Apostles' death. As the Apostles and other figures who had provided unity to the Church on a broader organisational level were martyred or died, or were imprisoned, other figures and roles had to take their place.

By the time of Ignatius in the first half of the 2nd century, we see an order of the Church with bishops, elders and deacons. However, it is likely that this was not the order of the

Church in the Apostolic era. Such an order seems to have been developing in certain parts during the Apostolic era, but only became the universal norm later on, and even then the evolution of Church government from its initial form varied somewhat from region to region.

During the Apostolic era, the Church seems to have been organised primarily by households, with an order starting to develop at the city level. Such an order seems to have come more quickly in places like Jerusalem, where James would have occupied a role similar to that described later as that of the bishop or overseer, and also in cities like Antioch. In other locations, perhaps especially in rural ones, the Church mostly operated on the domestic level, perhaps with some interaction among the leaders of those churches on a local level.

R. Alastair Campbell, in his book *The Elders' Seniority Within Earliest Christianity*, writes, When we take seriously the household context of the earliest congregations, attested to us both for Pauline and Jewish Christianity, a rather uniform pattern of Church organisation becomes evident. The household has its head, who functions towards the believers as an overseer, presiding at the table, offering prayer, inviting one or another to speak, handling monies perhaps, because it is natural that as a person of seniority, means and education, he should do so. As the little congregation grows, others assist him, whether in teaching or in serving tables.

It will be natural to call such people helpers or deacons. As the house churches multiply, the leaders need to confer. Perhaps a Paul or a James needs to address them.

These are the elders of the Christian community, owing their prestige to their leadership of their households, as the elders have always done. At some point, as when the Twelve cease to be a force in Jerusalem, or Paul's personal supervision is removed from his churches, the need for a local overseer is felt, to safeguard the unity of the churches in the face of threats from inside or outside, and the congregations come together in one place under one overseer, with a consequent loss of status by the elders, who no longer lead their own meetings. We have a window into something of this organisation of the early church, in figures like Gaius, who is mentioned in Romans 16, verse 23, as a host to Paul and the whole church.

The organisation of the church that we see develop is not something that seemed to arise from direct divine command, rather it seems to be a result of spirit-directed evolution of the church's structure, and human wisdom in organisation. In the initial household structure, the elders would have had their role almost by default. They were the heads of a household hosting a meeting, the ones who in many cases would have started the church, and would naturally be the ones perceived to be its guardians.

In the original domestic context of the church, the role of elders and deacons would be far more organic. The elders wouldn't have a particular office, they would just be those

recognised as the natural community leaders. This domestic setting also explains some of the challenges that Paul deals with in the preceding chapter.

Where a wealthy woman, for instance, was the patroness of the church, and the one who hosted the church in her house, it would be understandable for a situation to arise, where one might find such a woman leading a domestic congregation. As Alistair Stewart observes in his book *The Original Bishops*, the rare instances of women in church leadership in the early centuries of the church seemed to involve such domestic settings. As the church developed beyond the original domestic setting, and started to assume a broader associational structure, such exceptional cases soon vanished.

What we likely see in 1 Timothy chapter 3, is a stage in the development of the church beyond this initial household organisation, to a form that is more locally centralised, within a single city, or something like that. Where once you had a number of different house churches, with their various leaders, who would have been the elders, who would occasionally assemble together as the broader church of the area, now the more formal office of the overseer emerges. With the rise of the town church leader, you would have a decrease of the status of the house church leaders.

Many of the house church leaders would now function more as presbyters, under the leadership of the overseer. While the house church leader might be the *de facto* leader of that congregation, by virtue of the fact that he hosted the congregation in his house, the overseer, or town church leader, is more of an office to which people must aspire, as we see in verse 1. Suitable men for this role were supposed to be people of good repute, well respected in their own household, and in the wider community. A leader without such respect would lack important moral authority.

A suitable overseer was a sort of head of household for the local church, and the characteristics that would render someone suitable for such a role would largely be demonstrated in the context of his own household. The role of the overseer was a fatherly role. The role of managing a household, of ensuring that it is provided for, of upholding its good order, of teaching and training, and of exercising discipline where wrong has been done.

The role of the pastor, as we tend to think about it, tends to be quite narrowed from that of the overseer, in large part because churches no longer tend to think of themselves or to function as households. Like a good father, the overseer is in many respects someone who leads his household by virtue of his character, by setting the tone for everyone else. For this reason, it is so important that the overseer be of impeccable reputation, that he be noted for godly character, that his existing sphere of influence be one in which he has already proved himself to be good.

He should be gentle, not someone who uses his strength to domineer over others. He must not be a lover of money, someone who will be corrupt and accumulate wealth for

himself, fleecing the flock. He must be self-mastered.

He must avoid the vices of drunkenness and other things like that. His family life matters too. He must have only one wife.

Presumably, this is speaking to a situation where some converts might have had a couple of wives. Such persons would not be suitable for church leadership in the future. His children should be submitted to him, honouring him as a father.

Where such honour is lacking, it might well be a sign that he is not a suitable leader for the church more broadly. Verses 6 and 7 both mention the devil. Verse 6 speaks of the danger of pride for a recent convert.

Presumably, in the reference to the condemnation of the devil, speaking of that vice which is most characteristic of Satan. The devil also has his eye upon such leaders. He will seek to bring them down.

It is important that church leaders have a strong reputation with outsiders, with non-Christians. Satan is seeking to destroy the church, and one of the best ways to destroy the church is to take down its leaders. Consequently, the church should be very concerned about the reputation of those that are overseeing it.

Similar instructions are given in verses 8 to 13 concerning the role of deacons. Deacons should be thought of as the assistants to the overseer. As we see in verse 12, the deacons seem to be heads of their own households, which suggests that many of the former elders or house church leaders are now functioning in this diaconal office.

It is not clear whether the deacons ordinarily taught, although we are told that they had to hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. Like the elders, they had to be tested and prove themselves to be of blameless character. Those who, having been appointed, acquit their office well, would end up gaining a good standing.

This is likely a reference to the honour that they would enjoy among the community of faith. One of the chief duties of the overseer was to be hospitable. He had an economic role to play relative to the wider church, ensuring that people's material needs were provided for.

The hospitality of the deacons is not mentioned in the same way, although some have seen in verse 11 a reference to their wives, suggesting that they would naturally have a part in their husband's ministry, mostly consisting of hospitality work. It is, however, interesting that apart from the instruction that he be the husband of one wife, there are no instructions given for the wife of an overseer. This curious contrast between the instructions for the overseers and the deacons, coupled with the fact that the instructions for testing the deacons are the same as those for testing the women, in verse 11, has suggested to many that what we have in verse 11 are a reference to

deaconesses.

This seems quite likely to me. We should not presume that the deaconesses are interchangeable with the deacons. As we saw in the preceding chapter, ministry is conditioned by gender.

Furthermore, the role of the overseer seems to be exclusive to men, and many of the deacons, as servants of the overseer, would become overseers themselves in time. Verse 12 also singles out deacons as husbands, fathers, and heads of households, all of which emphasise male dimensions of their office. Nevertheless, any healthy household has men and women involved, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters.

And so we should not be at all surprised to see the prominence of many women within the context of a church that is modelled after the household. The concluding verses of the chapter speak to this reality of the church as the household of God. Paul is writing to Timothy, hoping to come soon, but giving him instruction for how to organise this household.

If this is written in the window of time in Acts chapter 20 verses 1-3, Paul's visit might only have been a month or two and coming. However, he is not certain of his plans, and there is the possibility of his being delayed. The church is the household of the living God, and this household is founded upon the truth, is founded upon a great statement with which Paul ends the chapter.

The statement might be a hymn, which could be divided into three sets of two statements. These three pairs of statements join together elements, flesh, spirit, angels, nations, world and glory. As a sort of Christological hymn, it describes salvation history, what Christ has wrought within his coming.

Great indeed we confess is the mystery of godliness might remind us of a statement that we heard earlier in the context of Ephesus. In Acts chapter 19 verse 28, When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, Great is Artemis of the Ephesians. Paul here gives us a counter statement, Great rather is Christ.

The mystery of godliness is the mystery of the Christian faith. Jesus Christ is a manifestation of God in the flesh. Flesh in Paul has all sorts of connotations, of weakness, mortality, the realm of sin and death, all experienced in our bodily existence.

It was this realm that Christ entered, and it was in this realm that God was seen in him. He was vindicated by the spirit. If the first reference is to Christ's existence under the condition of the flesh, the second is the reference to the resurrection.

We have a similar statement in Romans chapter 1 verses 3-4, concerning his son who was descended from David according to the flesh, and was declared to be the son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus

Christ our Lord. The flesh-spirit contrast also plays out in verses like Romans chapter 8 verse 11. If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you.

Who are the angels? Are the angels a reference to human messengers, witnesses to the resurrection? That's a possible reading that some have suggested. Alternatively, it might be a reference to a triumphant appearance before the angelic powers, both good and evil. From this Paul moves to the proclamation of Christ and his gospel among the nations, as the word went out by the power of the spirit.

The witnessing of Christ's glory by the heavenly hosts, by the angels, corresponds with the testimony born to his name before earthly powers. This testimony proved effective as many in the world believed upon him. Here the world is paired with glory, the heavenly realm into which Christ was taken, a realm in which he is seated at God's right hand until all of his enemies are placed under his feet.

A question to consider, what are some of the different terms and images that are used to describe leaders of the church in the New Testament? From instructions concerning the ordering of the church, in 1 Timothy chapter 4 Paul addresses Timothy more directly concerning his role in the situation in Ephesus. Firstly there are the false teachings that he needs to address, then there are the ways that he needs to behave and the actions that he needs to take as a servant of Jesus Christ. Paul begins by presenting some of the challenges that the Ephesian church is facing within the framework of redemptive history.

They are in the prophesied last days, there is about to be an upheaval in the ordering of the world and Timothy should not be surprised that these false teachings have arisen at this juncture. We can see a similar statement in 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 1 but understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. Jesus had also taught this in the Olivet discourse, in places like Matthew chapter 24 verse 11 for instance and many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.

The false teaching is attributed to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons. The deceitful spirits describe the instigating forces behind these teachings and the teachings of demons describe the teaching in terms of their demonic content. The teachings are spread by deceitful spirits and their substance arises from demons.

These teachings will deceive and lead some astray and the teachings will be spread by persons who have been compromised, insincere liars whose consciences have been seared. The content of these false teachings are described in verse 3, forbidding of marriage and requiring abstinence from foods. We might speculate here about the exact nature of these teachings.

Something more than just observance of Jewish kosher laws seems to be involved here. Nor does this seem to be like the situation Paul tackled in Corinth, a matter of eating food sacrificed to idols. Paul had already made his views on that matter clear.

Considering the other teachings that seem to have been spread in Ephesus, it may be that what Paul was dealing with here was a sort of Hellenized Jewish asceticism, a form of asceticism based upon Jewish myths that had developed within a Greek cultural context. Perhaps they looked back to the pre-fall state, prior to man's eating of meat and prior to a situation where men and women had sexual relations. Or perhaps the teaching was developed in the context of the new creation, where there would no longer be marriage or giving in marriage, and where meat-eating would presumably cease.

Paul addresses these issues by alluding back to the book of Genesis and the teaching there. In Genesis 1, verse 29 for instance, man was given the privilege of eating of every tree and of every plant. And in Genesis 9, verse 3, man was explicitly given the right to eat of the animals too.

The foods were created by God and they were created to be received with thanksgiving. An appropriate response to God's good gifts is to enjoy them and give thanks. In Romans 14, verse 14, Paul makes clear that he does not believe that anything created by God is unclean in itself.

I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. This is why reception of these gifts needs to be with belief, with knowledge of the truth and with thanksgiving. If things can't be received in that manner, they aren't being received as gifts and can't be properly enjoyed.

The statement that all of these things are good again alludes back to Genesis, chapter 1, verse 31. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. Creation can be misused.

It can be used in a way that's not of faith or in knowledge of the truth. It can also be used in an ungrateful manner. God's good gifts can be perverted and wrongly received.

And where they are being perverted or misused in such a manner, we must abstain. However, the gifts as given by God are good things. And any suggestion that abstinence from good gifts makes you a holier person should be viewed with great suspicion.

God's good gifts are made holy by the word of God. Perhaps this is the word of the gospel, or perhaps the word of Christ by which all things were declared clean, or perhaps the word of the scripture more generally, or maybe something else. Prayer is also mentioned here.

Prayer presumably thanksgiving. Perhaps prayers at meal times are particularly in view

here. Timothy needs to instruct the Ephesians in these matters.

It is in such a manner that he will acquit himself well as a servant of Christ Jesus, demonstrating his knowledge of the content of the Christian faith, and of the good and sound doctrine that stands opposed to the false teaching of the opponents in Ephesus. Once again, he is warned against the irreverent, silly myths. The myths in question are not godly, and Paul also regards them as fundamentally theologically unserious, unworthy of regard.

He more literally characterises them as old women's fables, the sort of superstitious legends that would be spread by people without training in the law. As an alternative to this, Timothy must train himself for godliness. Athletic imagery is introduced at this point, and Paul fills it out by contrasting godliness with bodily training.

The sort of rigorous physical training that an athlete might undergo in preparation for an event has purpose and value, yet its value is exceedingly limited compared to the value of godliness. Physical training can increase the potential of the body in this life, but godliness prepares us for this life and the life to come. It has value in every way.

It deals with the comprehensive character of human existence, not just the physical body. Paul underlines this point in verse 9, the saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. This is a formula that we have already encountered a couple of times in the book.

By comparing and contrasting rigorous physical training and training in godliness, Paul encourages Timothy and us to regard godliness as a discipline that we should take every bit as seriously as an athlete takes bodily exercise. It is something that must become the overriding focus of our lives. We must give ourselves to deliberate practice, not just passively coasting along, but in a determined fashion, devoting ourselves to disciplines that will increase our spiritual capacity.

The Christian's existence must be a lifelong growth in the practice of discipleship, learning the disciplines of prayer, of the reading of the scriptures, of the works of mercy, of integrity in speech and practice, of service within the body of Christ. Filling out Paul's analogy, we might think of the church as a spiritual gymnasium, where many people are training together, pushing each other to greater heights, training each other in the disciplines by which they will increase their strength. Similarly, the good pastor should be like a coach, training Christians in spiritual disciplines, encouraging and exhorting them to keep on going, providing them with an example to aspire to, and holding them accountable for failure.

Paul teaches that all of this is done because we have set our hope on the living God. The living God is the source of life, and committing ourselves to godliness is something that we do because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the source of our present

life and our life in the age to come. Paul speaks of God as the saviour of all people, especially of those who believe.

Here our minds should be drawn back to 1 Timothy 2, verses 3 and 4. This is good and it is pleasing in the sight of God our saviour, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. By speaking of God as the saviour of all people, Paul is likely referring to the comprehensive character of God's salvation. It addresses the situation of the whole world, it is offered to every single person.

The statement that follows, however, qualifies it, particularly of those who believe. It is by belief that this general salvation is received. While God's salvation is addressed to all mankind, it is only those who receive Christ by faith that actually enjoy it.

Nevertheless, there are numerous blessings of Christ's rule that are enjoyed even by those who never respond to the gospel. Paul charges Timothy to command and to teach these things. In commanding he would lay them down as authoritative teaching that must order the life of the church.

In teaching them he would explain the rationale and he would instruct people in how to understand them. Timothy's confidence might have been shaken by the fact that he was relatively young, being sent as Paul's representative to a church where there would be many people who were older than him. This is one of the junctures in the book of 1 Timothy where the question of when the book was written is of some consequence.

If the book of 1 Timothy was written in the window of time of Acts 20 1-3, then Timothy may have been in his early twenties. If it was written after Paul's Roman imprisonment, at the end of the book of Acts, then Timothy would likely have been at least in his mid-thirties. We see a similar statement in 1 Corinthians 16 10-11.

Timothy is instructed to provide an example to the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. In his speech he would need to show wisdom and mastery. In his conduct he would need to show the integrity between the message that he declared and the actions that he performed.

In love he would show his devotion to Christ and to his people. In faith he would demonstrate his confidence in the word and person of Christ. And in purity his chaste behaviour, particularly towards women.

Perhaps in the purity we also have another reference to the integrity that he needs to show. In 1 Corinthians 4 17 Paul describes Timothy as his son who represents his own character. Paul imitates Christ, he calls the Corinthians to imitate him and he gives them Timothy who has imitated him.

As a good leader Timothy needs to lead by example. He needs to be an exemplar of the sort of behaviour that the Christian needs to exhibit. To this end, until Paul returns,

Timothy is instructed to devote himself to the public reading of scripture.

This is the fundamental practice of the church, the corporate reading of the scripture and study of it. That leads then to the practice of exhortation that takes the word of the scripture and gives it an imperative force in the life of the congregation. And then the second practice of teaching by which people are instructed so that they might better understand what they hear in the public reading of the scripture.

Timothy had received a gift by which he would be better able to perform the ministry that had been given to him. The gift here is associated with an act of prophecy and also with the laying on of hands. Elsewhere in 2 Timothy 1 6 we read of another event of laying on of hands when Paul laid hands on Timothy.

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. Whether these were two different events of the laying on of hands or the same one is not immediately clear. I believe it is most likely that the laying on of the hands of the elders might have been the Ephesian house church leaders appointing Timothy to act in a temporary overseer role over them.

While Paul's laying of his hands on Timothy was appointing Timothy to act as his apostolic plenipotentiary emissary. Timothy has been authorised to perform a mission. He has also presumably been empowered by the spirit and exhorted and encouraged by a prophecy given concerning him.

He must devote himself to performing what he has been given. It is only in performing such a vocation that the gift will actually be enjoyed and be rendered effective. To do this, like the effective athlete, he must continually practice these things.

He must immerse himself in them. It must become his entire world. It must be what he lives and breathes every single day.

As he does this, he will be a more effective example. People will see the progress that he is making and he will thereby inspire them to make progress in their own Christian lives. Timothy's primary focus must be keeping watch upon himself.

By keeping watch upon himself and by practicing his own Christian life, he will be the most effective leader that he can be. In many ways, the most effective shepherd of a community is the person who watches more closely over himself than over anyone else. He masters himself and sets an example for others thereby.

He sets the tone for the entire community. Leadership will always be a lot easier when you are giving people something worth following. And the man who is keeping close watch over himself will be in the best position to do this.

Likewise, he also needs to be diligent and watchful over what he is teaching. It is the

truth that he lives and teaches that will be effective in saving himself and the various people to whom he ministers. A question to consider.

How might Paul's analogy between the Christian life and athletic training inform our models and our practices of Christian discipleship? In 1 Timothy chapter 5, Paul instructs Timothy concerning various groups within the congregation. Various age groups and then the widows and the elders. As Timothy addresses the various issues in the church in Ephesus, he needs to be mindful of the way that he interacts with different age and gender groups.

The instructions in verses 1 and 2 relate with the teaching that follows concerning a specific group of older women, the widows, and a specific group of older men, the elders. It also develops the portrayal of the church as the household of God as in chapter 3. The church is like an extended family and Timothy needs to deal with the members of the church accordingly. He compares older men to fathers, younger men to brothers, older women to mothers, and younger women to sisters.

We should beware of reading this too much in terms of the modern nuclear family. Rather, we should think of the large extended family with uncles and aunts, cousins, grandparents, nieces and nephews, and various other forms of relations. Elsewhere, Paul also speaks of different groups within the church by age and gender.

In Titus chapter 2 verses 1 to 6, for instance. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. As the apostle Paul's emissary, Timothy has authority, but he needs to learn how to use it properly.

He will, for instance, have to be dealing with the elders as we see at the end of this chapter. And Paul's instruction concerning how to approach older men at the beginning of the chapter provides Timothy with direction about how he ought to go about dealing with those elders that have failed in some regard. When dealing with older men, Timothy needs to moderate his authoritative approach with the deference that's due to father figures.

Rather than rebuking such an older man, he needs to exhort and encourage him. Such an approach operates within the honour that is due to such a figure while still allowing for correction to be heard. Timothy will have more freedom when dealing with the younger men, men who are his peers in age and younger.

As in the case of dealing with the older men, when he deals with the older women, Timothy needs to show them a proper honour, in this case treating them as he would a mother. Timothy needs to treat the women of his age and younger as sisters, and here it is particularly emphasised that he must act with purity towards them. Given the household character of the church, Paul is concerned that Timothy perceive and operate within the structures of honour, authority and association that naturally exist in a society

that's ordered by gender and age.

Using the relations of the extended family as guides, Paul can give him a template within which to think about the way that he relates to different groups. The church does not float free of the generational and gendered character of communal life more generally. This was one of the concerns of Paul in chapter 2 when dealing with men and women in the congregations.

In the related passage in Titus chapter 1, we should note the gendered and generational character of the church is expressed in the orders of its teaching. The discipleship of the younger women is largely undertaken by older women, not by Titus himself. Titus, however, plays that role relative to the younger men.

There seem to have been problems in the Ephesian congregations around the issue of widows, and it is to this matter that Paul now turns in verses 3-16. Throughout the scripture the Lord expresses an especial concern for the widow, the fatherless and the stranger. Isaiah chapter 1 verse 17 Learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression, bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

James chapter 1 verse 27 As a sort of extended family, the church would take responsibility for providing for needy persons in their midst. We see this in Acts chapter 6 where there were structures of community provision for the widows in the congregation. The church is not merely a place of teaching, it is a household, and there needs to be provision of material assistance to its members.

In Acts chapter 9 we also see another instance where widows are mentioned as a group, as those who had been helped by Dorcas. The problem in Ephesus, however, is that the church's provision for widows seems to have been abused. Some young widows of marriageable age were depending upon the church's resources when they did not need to be.

Some families seemed to have been neglecting their duty of support and handing it over to the church, expecting the church to pick up their slack. Other widows enjoying the support of the church were engaging in community-disrupting behaviours. Paul addresses this situation by providing criteria by which true widows could be supported, and unworthy recipients of the church's support would be removed from the rosters.

The widows who were enrolled for support by the church needed to be without family to support them. If a widow had such family, it was not the duty of the church to look after her, but the duty of the family, and if the family was not prepared to do its duty, then any of the widow's family members shirking their responsibility should not be regarded as members of the community of faith. This was a rejection of the faith, and the sort of Christian behaviour that ought to accompany it.

Paul restricts the church's support to widows over the age of 60 who had a reputation and a long-standing record of godliness. The widows to be supported by the church were expected to have been wives of one husband, faithful mothers, persons who had practised hospitality, especially to the members of the church, and marked out by commitment to charity and the works of mercy. These were women who had given much of their lives and their resources to the service of the household of faith, and the household of faith had a corresponding duty to show them great honour.

The statement with which Paul begins this section, honour widows who are truly widows, singles out this group for special respect, and also the material provision and support that is a necessary component of such honour. The faithful widows are contrasted with another group, a group of younger widows, perhaps examples of the new Roman women that some have seen in the background of the book of 1 Timothy and its situation in Ephesus. A number of these women, presumably more wealthy, were given to practices that were causing trouble in the community.

Rather than devoting themselves to the works of mercy and charity, they went from house to house engaging in gossip, slander and the spread of false teaching. Their commitment to the faith also seemed to have been slight. A number of them, itching to remarry, seemed to have sought new husbands from outside of the household of faith, abandoning Christ for a pagan spouse.

This would greatly have unsettled the church and compromised its witness to the surrounding society. Paul is concerned that women susceptible to such falling away are not enrolled in the company of widows that the church provides for. They can provide for themselves, many of them will have families that will be able to support them, and no small number of them will be able to remarry.

While there are situations, as we see in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, where Paul can advise against remarriage, here he presents it as a prudent response to the young widow's condition. The ideal was that such young women remarried and gave themselves to the activities of a wife and mother. We should also bear in mind the concept of managing their households would have been a very expansive activity within the first century context, far wider than what we often think about in terms of homemaking.

The woman who managed her household was overseeing the children, but also the wider activity of the household as a site of production. In many respects the household could be compared to a small business today, and much of the activity of production within a society occurred within its context. Many have wondered whether the widows described in this chapter were a particular class of appointed women within the church, with special ministry roles.

This, it seems to me, is unlikely. While the women in question were being honoured for their past service, they were selected not according to their aptitude for future ministry,

but according to their need. Besides, as a group limited to women over 60, many of the widows would not be able to perform any sort of active ministry.

Given the degree to which the modern church has been abstracted from the context of the household, we are more likely to think of the church as an organisation that is perhaps similar to a business, with importance in the community being defined by official roles, titles, and by positions on the payroll. This was not the case in the early church, and I think we are misguided if we are looking for the prominence of women in the community by looking for official positions and titles. The widows that are honoured here, for instance, are women who had been serving the community for some time already prior to their being enrolled in the company of the widows.

As the church functioned as a household, the church was not primarily defined by official titles and positions, rather it was the life of a community, and the ministries and works of service in the community mostly did not occur under the auspices of official titles and roles. Women like those described here who were faithful in their service of the community were supposed to be treated with a special honour, for which material support and provision was essential. Elsewhere in Paul's letters, in places like Romans 16, we see the great number of women who were active within particular communities.

Churches in this context seem to have numerous prominent women, even while the positions of official oversight of the communities were exclusive to men. In modern Christian contexts, where most of the ministry of churches occurs through churches as official organisations and structures, it may be difficult to recover the prominence that women enjoyed within a structure of the church as an organic household, and an active community, most of whose life was carried out in informal contexts. However, it seems to me that pursuing such a challenge is absolutely essential if the church is to be what it ought to be.

The less that the church functions like an extended family and household, the more that there will be a breach between word and life within its existence. From the widows, Paul turns to another group that need to be accorded special honour, the elders. Alistair Campbell, in his book on the elders, argues that the group referred to here are the elders of the town churches, rather than just the households.

The elders of the house churches would not presumably have been paid for their labour in preaching and teaching. It was only the overseers, the leaders of the town churches, that would need to give themselves completely to these tasks. As the fatherly guardians and instructors of the Christians within a given town, it was important that the office of these elders be shown a proper respect.

This would involve paying them for their efforts. To support his assertion here, Paul cites two statements, the first from Deuteronomy 25, verse 4, concerning the arks threshing the grain, and then the second from Luke 10, verse 7, words of our Lord, and remain in

the same house eating and drinking what they provide, for the labourer deserves his wages. Elsewhere, in 1 Corinthians 9, verses 7-14, Paul also references the case law concerning the arks threshing out the grain.

If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much that we reap material things from you? If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. There appear to have been issues with some of the elders in Ephesus.

Certain elders seem to have been accused of sin, and some seem to have been clearly guilty. Part of Timothy's task in this situation is to exercise justice as Paul's representative. To equip him in this task, Paul references a number of Old Testament principles of justice.

The first concerns proper evidence. Deuteronomy 19, verse 15 A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offence that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.

Where repentance was not forthcoming, elders would have to be rebuked in the presence of everyone. When private and respectful appeal to them as fathers had failed, the company of the elders and Timothy would have to gather together and collectively enact justice in the situation. A communally witnessed rebuke would also be a deterrent for any others.

Deuteronomy 19, verse 20 is another principle in the background here. And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you. The impenitent sinning elder is rebuked in the presence of the whole company of the church, and Paul charges Timothy in the presence of the entire heavenly council, of God, of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels.

Like Old Testament judges, he is charged to exercise these rules without prejudice and without partiality. He needs to be very careful about appointing people to the office of an elder. He must not take part in the sins of others, whether allowing people's abuses to continue without rebuke, or by appointing people who are not worthy of the positions that they are entering.

As an aside at this juncture, Paul speaks to Timothy's health and his need to drink wine. Perhaps Timothy was experiencing health issues, drinking unclean water while he was abstaining from alcohol. Drinking wine in moderation would not be giving himself to

drunkenness, but it would spare him from the health issues that he might experience otherwise.

Paul has given Timothy a most solemn charge. However, Timothy, like any human being, is not up to the task of discerning other people's hearts. People's hearts cannot be fully discerned, and Paul recognises this at the end of the chapter.

Certain people's sins are conspicuous, or can be recognised by the observant person. Other sins, however, are secret sins, and only appear later over time, perhaps through sudden scandalous exposure, or perhaps in the character that they produce in a person over many years. Others may only be revealed on the day of judgement.

On the other hand, there are people whose good works are obvious and plain to everyone around them, and others whose good deeds are not seen by others, but are largely hidden. However, even those good deeds that are not immediately obvious will be made apparent over time. By their fruit you will know them, and people's habitual behaviours will be steadily revealed in their characters.

A question to consider. What are some of the ways in which modern churches can learn from Paul's teaching concerning the church as the household of God in the book of 1 Timothy? 1 Timothy chapter 5 mentioned two groups of persons who needed to be accorded honour, the widows and the elders. Chapter 6 begins with a third group, masters need to be honoured by their bond servants.

The teaching of verses 1 and 2 here could be related to the household codes that we find in places like Ephesians chapter 5 and 6, Colossians 3 and 4, and 1 Peter 2 and 3. In contrast to those other places, this is not a more comprehensive teaching about masters and servants, husbands and wives, children and parents, but only deals with how slaves need to treat their masters. Presumably the Christians in Corinth already were familiar with household codes, and the teaching here is more occasional in character, addressing a particular problem that had arisen in the congregation. Unruly servants would have been a cause of disrepute for Christians within the society, if slaves, presumably emboldened by the dignifying teaching of Paul's gospel, a message that presented them as standing on the same level ground before God as their masters, started to shrug off their responsibilities of service, non-Christians in the society might see the church as fundamentally opposed to social order, a destructive and revolutionary force undermining its social institutions.

Paul's concern in verse 1 is quite manifest, he does not want the name of God and the teaching of the gospel to be reviled. Elsewhere in scripture, prophets challenge the people of God, telling them that the nations blaspheme on account of them. Their openly sinful and rebellious behaviour causes people outside of the people of God to despise the truth that they stand for.

To address this concern, and to avoid the gospel coming into social disrepute, Paul instructs the bond servants to treat their masters as worthy of honour, recognising the social institution of slavery. However, in the way that he treats the duties of servants, there are elements to be seen that might surprise us. Paul especially addresses the relationship between believing servants and those masters who are also believing.

In such situations there would be an especially keen temptation to treat the masters as social equals on account of the gospel, rather than truly as masters. Paul's understanding of unity and a sort of equality in Christ do not, however, depend upon the equalisation of social structures, even though they may have some implications for them. Paul's reasoning in verse 2 is a surprising one.

He speaks of the slaves' relationship to their believing masters in language of benefaction, language that was typically applied in a person of higher status' relationship to someone who was of lower status. Philip Towner observes some of the parallels between Paul's teaching here and that of Seneca, his contemporary. He quotes from Seneca, And just as a hireling gives a benefit if he supplies more than he contracted to do, so a slave, when he exceeds the bounds of his station in goodwill towards his master by daring some lofty deed that would be an honour even to those more happily born, a benefit is found to exist inside the household.

Jesus employs a similar sort of logic in the Sermon on the Mount, when he instructs those who have an item taken to give even more to those who would take from them. Rather than being a passive victim or a person imposed upon by another, in going over and above expectations in such a manner, the Christian becomes the benefactor and the person of greater agency within the situation. The person who would try to take from them, or in this case, the person to whom they owed service, is now placed in the position of being the recipient of their benefaction.

The Christian slave can thereby enjoy agency and dignity within his situation. There is a parallel that can be drawn between the opening verses of the letter in chapter 1 verses 3 to 20 and the closing section of the letter which Towner points out. Chapter 1 verse 3 contains a command to Timothy to instruct, which corresponds to the second half of chapter 6 verse 2. Chapter 1 verses 4 to 7, there is a description of the false teachers and the theme of love, and here in verses 3 to 6, again we have the false teachers and the theme now of godliness.

In chapter 1 verses 7 to 10, the misunderstanding of the law is addressed, and then in this chapter, verses 5 and 6, the misunderstanding of wealth is addressed, with the following critique of an ordinate desire for it. In verses 11 to 16 of chapter 1, there is the contrasting model of Paul that is provided, along with the work of Christ in his life. And then here, there is the model of Timothy in verses 11 to 15, again with the example of Christ brought in as part of it.

Both chapters have a concluding doxology, in verse 17 of chapter 1 and in verse 16 of this chapter. After both doxologies, there is a repetition of Timothy's commission. The end of verse 2 should be taken with the verses that follow.

Paul charges Timothy to perform his task of teaching. In performing this task, he will have to deal with the false teachers. The false teachers here are defined by those who teach different doctrines, apart from the one that has been taught in Christ.

The true doctrine agrees with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and is a teaching that accords with godliness. The true teaching will produce a certain character of life, which we might call godliness. The reference to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ might perhaps be a reference to our Lord's own words, or maybe it's a reference to the words concerning him.

Implied here is a doctrinal and a moral test. The doctrinal test is conformity with the teaching of the tradition, and the moral test is the fruit of godliness. Paul goes on to explain something of the psychology of the false teachers who will fail these tests.

Such teachers are driven by pride, but are fundamentally ignorant. They seem to have a deep-seated need for controversy, and want to argue about minor matters. While the person who is not a perceptive reader of other people's emotions might imagine that the false teachers are genuinely concerned about the issues that they are ostensibly arguing about, Paul wants Timothy to be aware that this is not the case.

They argue because they need to argue, not because they genuinely care about the issues. For them, it is more likely a game of status. Finding things to argue about is a way to avoid submitting to others, or showing any sort of humility.

It is a way to vaunt their own authority and importance over those to whom they should be listening. It is essential that a leader recognize the character of such people within a community, and deal with them truly. By their very nature, such persons are fractious, and will cause all sorts of problems in a community where they are allowed free reign.

Because they are ultimately driven by pride and conceit, they treat the truth as something to be used for their own advantage and advancement. They teach in such a way to increase their income. Flattering and pandering to the wealthy, and fleecing the flock.

We might also see a connection between their divisiveness, their pride, and the way in which they are driven by a desire for gain. They want to form their own following, and to do that, they need to drive people away from others. They sow divisions, suspicions, slanders, and other things that consolidate their own support, and turn their followers against faithful teachers of the gospel.

To the behavior of such false teachers, Paul contrasts the faithful teacher of the word of

God. For such a person, godliness with contentment or self-sufficiency is great gain. The faithful teacher is not using godliness.

He sees godliness as an end in itself. It is a great gain to be conformed to the character of Christ, and to know contentment with that, the self-sufficiency that allows you to enjoy peace of mind, and satisfaction in all sorts of material conditions, is a considerable blessing. Paul already spoke of the surpassing value of godliness in the preceding chapter, in verses 7 and 8. Have nothing to do with irreverent silly myths.

Rather, train yourself for godliness. For while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life, and also for the life to come. One of the things that Paul is revealing here is the connection between a commitment to the truth, and one's management of one's fundamental loves and passions.

The person who is driven by pride will always have a tendency towards division, and a desire for wealth and status that makes him a source of conflict. These fundamental disorders of the heart will lead such persons in the direction of false teaching. If the faithful teacher wants to avoid being led astray in such a manner, he needs to master his own heart.

He needs to deal with the pride and conceit that makes him resist learning the truth, or that leads him to want to be the centre of the stage, the head of the movement. Paul reminds Timothy that we will bring nothing out of the world just as we brought nothing into it, and consequently, the contentment with the little things that we need for our continued life, with godliness, is a great thing to enjoy. The extreme desire for more, those desires that tether us to this present age, are a source of all sorts of temptations, evils, traps, and have been the cause of the downfall of many.

Job expresses some of the contentment that can come with godliness in chapter 1 verse 21 of his book. And he said, Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. Jesus also teaches on this matter in the Sermon on the Mount, teaching his disciples that the more they invest their hearts and their energies and their resources in earthly treasures, the more that they will find their hearts trapped by those things. Matthew chapter 6 verses 19 to 21 Having signposted all of these dangers, Paul charges Timothy to flee from them.

The statement here, to flee from something and to pursue something else, can also be found in another form in 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 22. Paul addresses Timothy as a man of God, a man who has committed to the things of God, ought to be a godly man, a man characterized by the way of godliness. Paul depicts the way of godliness using a number of different terms, righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness.

Righteousness is moral uprightness. Godliness refers to a form of life and character that conforms to the God that has called us. Faith, love and steadfastness might be related to the three theological virtues of faith, love and hope.

To these must be added gentleness, whereas Timothy's opponents are characterized by a love of quarrels and conflict and division. Timothy must be gentle in the way that he treats people, a peacemaker, a reconciler, a man whose humility leads him to put other people's interests ahead of his own. This gentleness does not entail a lack of strength.

He is to fight the good fight of faith. This may be a more military metaphor, or it may be working with the athletic metaphors that we've had in preceding chapters. He has been charged with a mission, and he must lay hold of eternal life, just as he once confessed the name of Christ before many witnesses, presumably at the time of his baptism.

He needs to carry through with this commitment, standing firm and contending till the end. Once again, Paul charges Timothy in front of the whole heavenly assembly, before God and of Christ Jesus, and he gives the example of Christ Jesus as one who stood firm to the end. His faithful and unwavering commitment to his mission before Pontius Pilate is an example that the Christian should follow.

In a similar manner, facing the time of greatest testing, the Christian like Timothy should stand firm, holding firmly and without compromise to the commission that he has been given, and to do this until the time of the appearing of Jesus Christ. Paul concludes this section with a doxology, in which he expresses the incomparability of God. The language here perhaps underlines the way that the Lord has claimed to Timothy's loyalties over all others, and that pursuit of godliness in relationship to such an incomparable God is to be valued over everything else.

Before signing off the letter, Paul gives Timothy some instruction concerning the rich of this age. We find various forms of such teaching elsewhere in scripture, not least in the Sermon on the Mount, as already mentioned. In James chapter 1, verses 9 to 11, for instance, let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away.

For the sun rises with its scorching heat, and withers the grass, its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Recognizing the limited and fleeting character of earthly riches, the rich Christian is advised to invest his resources well, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.

By investing his riches in the service of the poor, he is storing up treasures for himself in heaven. By such investment of his riches, he is laying hold of that which is truly life, not just the apparent life of earthly wealth. Paul concludes by drawing Timothy's attention to the many people who have wrecked their faith by turning aside and abandoning the

charge that he has been given.

He is not to be ensnared by the so-called knowledge that so easily entices those who are proud and puffed up. Rather, in humility, he must remain faithful in his calling, guarding what has been committed to him, and faithfully discharging his commission to teach it to others. The concluding greeting, Grace be with you all, addresses a plural you, not just Timothy.

Perhaps Paul also has the Ephesian believers in view here. A question to consider. Within this chapter, Paul says rather a lot concerning riches.

In verse 10, he makes the famous statement, For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. What are some ways in which the love of money can serve as a root of various kinds of evil?