

YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Winter 2018-19 Leader Commentary



Unit 2: What Matters Most
Session 1: Live It Out (see pp. 124-127)

The Question: How do I demonstrate my life is grounded in the gospel?

The Point: How I live reflects whether the gospel is real to me.

Background Passage: 1 Timothy 1

Focal Passage: 1 Timothy 1:3-6,12-16,18-19

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, “How do I demonstrate my life is grounded in the gospel?” and drive home this one truth: How I live reflects whether the gospel is real to me.

Focus on These Points

My Life Is Laser Focused
(1 Tim. 1:3-6)

Paul wrote letters to nine churches and to four individuals, one of which was his coworker, Timothy. Timothy was Paul’s child in the faith (1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2). The first matter of business for Paul was to stop the teachers of false doctrine at Ephesus. He had instructed Timothy to remain there to deal with this problem and to remain faithful to the ministry entrusted to him.

What did the false teachers teach? They espoused “false doctrine.” The word *false* denotes another kind of doctrine than what Paul taught. The teaching differed from that body of truth already established as the foundational standard for the church. The church had been in existence long enough to have developed some bedrock basic teachings. To put forth a set of beliefs that contradicted these previously accepted doctrines undermined the stability of the church, its leadership, and its witness in the community.

Paul identified some specifics about the doctrine of the false teachers. They paid attention to “myths and endless genealogies” (v. 4). A *myth* denotes an untrustworthy fable or story. *Genealogies* indicate the toilsome task of searching out family roots by which to justify one’s position. The different doctrine apparently was based on fanciful ideas and useless details instead of God’s revealed truth. These studies promoted “empty speculations.” All were just distractions from the truth of God’s Word.

“Instruction” (v. 5) refers to Paul’s charge to Timothy in 1:3-4. The goal or end result of that charge was to produce love. This broad goal could include love for God and for others. This is the same

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kind of unselfish, sacrificial love demonstrated by Jesus when He willingly gave up His life that we might have eternal life. Paul identified two actions the counterfeit teachers did instead of promoting love. First, they “departed” from the pure heart, good conscience, and sincere faith that are essential to Christian love. Second, the teachers “turned aside” (went off the beaten path) to engage in “fruitless discussion.”

My Life Is Changed **(1 Tim. 1:12-16)**

Paul gave thanks for what “Christ Jesus our Lord” had done for him (v. 12). By a work of undeserved grace, the Lord saved Paul, “strengthened” (empowered) him, and appointed him to His service. Paul’s salvation and call took place together (Acts 9:1-20). By saying Christ considered him faithful, Paul was not implying he had earned his calling. He was expressing his amazement that Christ would use a man who had worked so viciously against Him (v. 13a). He affirmed that both his conversion and call were given Him through grace (vv. 14-16).

Paul stressed his unworthiness by admitting he had been a “blasphemer” (v. 13). Before his conversion he had denied the deity of Christ and had denounced His people as heretics who were following the teachings of an executed criminal and calling him Lord. As a persecutor, Paul took physical action against Christians. The Book of Acts details some of his attacks against people of faith (Acts 8:1,3; 9:1-2). Paul confessed to having been an “arrogant man.” He had exhibited a heartless unconcern for others and the harm he caused them.

The English word *overflowed* means “to fill a receptacle beyond its capacity” and expresses well the main thought of the Greek word. In verse 13 Paul described his direct, sinful opposition to Christ; in verse 14, he declared that God’s grace was abundantly more than adequate to forgive his sins. Paul gave all credit to the grace of our Lord. The Lord Jesus provided the salvation that Paul did not deserve and could not attain for himself.

Paul summarized his thoughts on thankfulness for salvation with one of his trustworthy sayings. Five such expressions exist in the Pastoral Letters (1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8).

The trustworthy saying itself states a basic tenet of the Christian faith—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” This provides a compact statement of Jesus’ purpose.

Paul admitted to be the worst sinner of all. The statement emphasized his knowledge of what sin did to his life and how much he needed salvation. “I am” indicates that, even though Paul had become a believer, he remained a sinner saved by grace. Paul’s testimony is evidence that God came to save all of us, even the worst offenders.

My Life Leaves Nothing on the Table **(1 Tim. 1:18-19)**

Timothy apparently was having a hard time in his battle for the truth against the false teachers. Paul offered a word of encouragement and commission for Timothy to do the job well. Paul saw the strength Timothy possessed and encouraged him to “fight the good fight” for the truth of the

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gospel. His weapons for battle were not worldly weapons but rather “faith” and a “good conscience.” His belief in the gospel and commitment to hold to it was enough to overcome the false teachers mentioned earlier in the chapter (1 Tim. 1:3-4).

Paul cited “Hymenaeus” and “Alexander” as those who “rejected these” (“faith” and a “good conscience”) “and have shipwrecked their faith” (vv. 19-20). Whether these individuals are the same as those mentioned elsewhere in Scripture is unknown. Paul’s delivering them over to Satan was a disciplinary action, perhaps excluding them from the church. The purpose was not to exclude them permanently but to lead them to repentance and restoration. As believers, we are called to fight the good fight and to avoid becoming a victim of a shipwrecked faith—a faith with no power or vitality.