

GUARDIANS OF THE MINISTRY

1ST TIMOTHY 1:1-2

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

2 To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. - 1 Timothy 1:1-2

Inside This Issue:

1 Timothy 1:1-2 & Notes	1
Personal Study Guide	2
Small Group Discussion Guide	3
A Back Page Thought from Pastor Jay	4

Notes on 1 Timothy 1:1-2

The letter of 1 Timothy was written largely in response to the presence and corrupting power of false teachers who had crept into the 1st-century church and/or defected from its true teachings. This was a troubling issue apparently in the church in Ephesus where Paul had left Timothy to provide leadership on his, and Christ's, behalf. These deceptive and self-serving teachers were quite troubling to Paul, but they were not a surprise. Years before, he had given what he thought might have been his final remarks to the Ephesian church elders (see Acts 20, part of which is printed below). In his speech, Paul had warned them that "fierce wolves" would appear, some even from their own midst, and would speak "twisted things" with the intent of "drawing away disciples after them." Once it was formed, these opportunistic quasi-theological inventors would try to turn the new church into their own group, loyal and supportive to them (rather than to Paul, or, more to the point, to Jesus). Now Paul's prophecy concerning the Ephesian church had come true.

We will be examining the nature of these false ideas, and Paul's corrective teachings, along the way as we study together. It is interesting at the outset, though, to see the shadow of such apostate (straying from essential orthodoxy) teachers even in Paul's opening greeting in this letter. He expands his typical letter introduction in two significant ways. First, he identifies his apostleship (one "sent") as having come by the "command of God... and of Christ Jesus." Thus, he affirms the truth of his teaching and the nature of his ministry as coming straight from God Himself. He is to be trusted and followed: Not those who oppose him and his teaching. Paul also adds the word "mercy" to the "Grace and Peace" greeting normally found in his epistles. With the survival of the fledgling church seemingly hanging in the balance, Paul knows it is God Himself and God's mercy that is desperately needed in this hour.

v.1 - apostle... means one sent on a mission, more specifically it is one of the authoritative group sent out to preach the gospel and made up especially of Christ's 12 original disciples and

Paul... **by command** [see above]... the word in Greek signifies a royal or divine decree from a king or a god... "Paul did not appoint himself an

apostle, nor was he selected by some committee. It was God himself who gave him this role." (Richard Peace, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, p.11)...

God our Savior... This "Savior" title for God is common in the Old Testament, but is only used by Paul here and in Titus... The current Roman Emperor, Nero, used the title of himself. In Ephesus, a city where emperor worship was strong, Paul points immediately away from Nero and to God... **Jesus our hope...** Salvation comes from God, and Christians trust in Jesus to bring it to completion and fullness upon His glorious return...

v.2 - Timothy [see previous guide]... **my true son...** the word for "true" comes from the word "legitimate," as in a child born in wedlock... given that his mother was Jewish and his father Greek/Gentile (see Acts 16:1), Paul naming his younger friend a "legitimate son" might have been very significant to Timothy who might well have been called "illegitimate" by Jew and Gentile alike... **Grace, mercy and peace...** the standard greeting in Greek letter form was "To so and so, greetings" (like "Dear so and so" in English)... The Greek word for greetings, "*charein*," Paul adjusted slightly and turned into "grace" (*charis*), and he typically added "peace" (*eirene* which is the Greek for the standard Hebrew greeting *peace/shalom*.) Only in the letters to Timothy and to Titus, Paul adds a third word to his greeting: "mercy" (*eleos*) which means compassionate leniency or "not getting what you deserve" and adds another dimension to what the gospel brings into human lives. "*Grace, mercy and peace*" is what Paul wishes for his friends in Ephesus.

From the Apostle Paul's parting speech to the Ephesian Elders...

...Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them...
- Acts 20:28-30

Read & Reflect - 1:1-2

First Reading: 1. Read through the whole book of 1 Timothy in one sitting. Write down a couple of your initial impressions of this letter...

2. With Paul's salutation in mind and substituting your name for Paul's & a younger friend or family member for Timothy's, rewrite these initial verses of greeting in your own words, as though it were your own letter you were beginning?

Search & Consider

1:1 - 1. What does the title "apostle" suggest to you?

2. Of whom does Paul say he is an apostle? What does this mean?

3. Who does Paul say caused him to become an apostle? What further designations does he give them? What does this mean to you? How might this additional affirmation of his apostleship help in his battle against false teachers?

1:2 - 1. What does Paul call Timothy? Why do you think he does so? What might this mean to Timothy?

2. What do these words mean? Where does Paul say they come from? When have you seen them in your own life

a. Grace:

b. Mercy:

c. Peace:

Apply

1. To whom did you write your letter introduction above? Why? How is he/she like a “Timothy” to you? How are you like a “Paul”?

2. Why might legitimacy (being “true”) have been important to Timothy? (See Acts 16:1) When has this been important to you?

For Small Group Discussion - 1 Timothy 1:1-2

- A. OPENER...** What is one job in the church you would never want to have (Pastor, Office Administrator, Nursery Coordinator, Children’s Ministries Director, Youth Director, Music Director, Worship Leader, Custodian, Treasurer, Clerk of Session...)?
- B. PERSONAL GOALS...** What are you hoping to gain from your time with 1 Timothy and with this group in the weeks ahead? (Stop and pray for one another and for all of your personal goals.)
- C. THE BOOK OF 1ST TIMOTHY...**
1. What personal impressions can you share about Paul’s letter(s) to Timothy from your recent reading or from previous studies, sermons, etc.?
 2. Why is it important for us to hear Paul’s words to Timothy as well as possible, as he would have heard them in the 1st century, before we begin applying them to our own lives in the 21st century?
- D. 1 TIMOTHY 1:1-2...** Share your Personal Study Guide answers above... As time permits, you may also want to focus on these questions...
1. Why do you think Paul made a point of spelling out his apostleship as coming “by command of God... and of Christ Jesus”?
 2. Why do you think Paul added “Mercy” in his last three letters to his normal “Grace and Peace to you” greeting?
 3. Which of these concepts — GRACE, MERCY, PEACE — is most meaningful to you right now? Why? From whom would you most like to hear these words spoken as a prayer for you or blessing to you?
 4. Do you think “false teachers” are still a problem in the church today? Why? Why not?
 5. In what ways do you think 1 Timothy will prove to be a valuable letter for us to pay attention to in the weeks ahead?
- E. MODERN DAY PAULS & TIMOTHYS...** Share your personal letter greeting above, to whom you addressed it and why.

Teaching the Word of God A Back Page Thought from Pastor Jay

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My father was adopted. This never mattered much to me. But I think it mattered to him. He told me once of meeting his birth mother. Sometime after marrying my mother, she reached out and they went to

see her. He learned that his birth father had been a navy seaman whose interest in her did not last past conception. She was young and afraid, and my father was left at the orphanage. That is what often happens when children are *illegitimate*. She apparently kept track of my father from afar as he grew. She had newspaper clippings from when he had joined the air force, when he had sung in concerts, etc. “She seemed quite a sad person” he told me of this woman he had not known. They did not develop a meaningful relationship after this. She was not, to him, a *legitimate* mother. He already had one of those.

My father also told me stories of the special relationship he had with his adoptive mother, how she had rescued him from that orphanage, and how he made a childhood promise to rescue her back one day. She had chosen him, my dad used to tell me. She had given him *legitimacy*, a home where he belonged, a name born of loving choice. When John Hull died, my grandmother remarried. She asked my Dad if it would be OK, and he said “of course.” I always knew her as Grandma Schaeffer, and it never seemed odd to me. Didn’t everyone have a grandmother with a name out of nowhere, and none with the same name as you? I never met her new husband. Well, actually I did once, but I was only a few weeks old. Years before, my Dad and he had had a severe falling out. My dad was no son of Mr. Schaeffer. Nosiree. He was *illegitimate*. My mom and dad and grandma worked out a scheme whereby they appeared one day at the Schaeffer household with firstborn-grandson-me in their arms. The idea was that Mr. Schaeffer was going to take one look at me, his grandpa heart was going to melt, and old grudges were going to disappear. It didn’t go that way. Mr Schaeffer stormed out of the house. (My first reconciliation ministry opportunity, and I failed miserably.) Every Christmastime, for a day, our family visited Grandma Schaeffer secretly at Aunt Aggie’s house. Seemed normal to me. Doesn’t everybody have clandestine holiday meetings with grandmothers?

In her later years, as Alzheimer’s Disease ravaged her mind, Grandma Schaeffer came and lived with my parents. She seemed to remember my father somewhat kindly, her “Jimmy.” She didn’t take so kindly to my mother, referring to her usually as “that woman” with clenched fists and gritted teeth. My mom was *illegitimate* to her, but my mom shared the burden of my father’s rescue promise. She cared for her incapacitated and belligerent mother-in-law with gracious tenderness. She clothed her. She bathed her. I was so proud of my mom (and to my shame I don’t remember ever telling her this). She demonstrated real love, *legitimate* love, up to the day Grandma Schaeffer died.

Now I have a real problem with the concept of “*illegitimate children*.” It is a very real part of human cultures all over the world and in every age. It was a significant reality in the Roman Empire in the days of Jesus and Paul and Timothy. It is still a significant reality today. But in essence it is a basic social manifestation of the brokenness of our world. Stop and think about it. Two adults of child-producing age and ability make a decision for reasons of selfish pleasure, tragic ignorance, foolish pride and/or blatant wickedness, and it is the resulting *innocent child* who then bears the major weight of their choice with the label *illegitimate*. I don’t see grown men and women living through the socially-prescribed designation *illegitimate mother*, *illegitimate father*, or *illegitimate adult*, but *illegitimate child*? Yep. It is unfair in the extreme. (And let’s not even go down the path of what happens to innocent children who are deemed *illegitimate* by their own mothers and fathers in a culture where abortion rights are sanctioned and defended with a fervor that borders on religious passion.) Here is an idea: There is no such thing as an *illegitimate child*. Whether or not it is a conception that is convenient, or a planned parenthood, the child involved is real, innocent, valuable, beautiful, and human—the precious object of God’s knowledge & concern. Children who have been labeled *illegitimate* may have a difficult time understanding and embracing this truth for themselves, but I believe with all my heart that it is true nonetheless.

When Paul the Apostle, at the beginning of his letter, calls Timothy his “true son,” he is using the Greek word *gnesios* (“true”) which was used originally to refer to a *legitimate* descendent (*genos*), one rightly born into the family. For Timothy the half-Jew and half-Greek [see notes on p.1] this would have been significant. Paul is pointing to his deep love for his young friend, & to the higher, truer, lasting, real, innocent, valuable, beautiful & human *legitimacy* that comes directly from God to HIS children, without any necessary confirmation from human choices, circumstances, planning, desires or designations. If God says you are *legit*, you are *legit*! I am reminded of the Apostle John’s timeless words from the first chapter of his grand Gospel account of Jesus’ life:

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. - John 1:9-14

Now what I have said about children—No such thing as *illegitimate*!—is not also true of ideas, philosophies, truth claims and the like. We can say things that are *legitimate* (true) about God, for example—God is great, good, creator, Jesus...—and we can say things that are *illegitimate*—God is non-existent or an impersonal force... Jesus was merely a good teacher and not God... One can, in other words, be a *legitimate* teacher of God’s truth or a false teacher... We will take up this discussion in our next issue.