

KICKING THE TIRES 1

1TIMOTHY 1-3

Today buying a car has become a science.

Research starts online. Consumer Reports and the Carfax are must reads. Once you select a car you take it to your own mechanic for the 50 point inspection. You go over the possible purchase with a fine-tooth comb.

Yet I recall a day when purchasing a car required “kicking some tires.”

A buyer got out in the lot and physically looked at the cars. You circled the body - peered at the engine - performed a visible, tangible inspection...

You might even kick a tire or two to see if it stayed bolted to the wheel.

Today, the expression “kicking the tires” is synonymous with performing a personal, hands-on inspection... A single guy goes for a cup of coffee with a girl from the office. He’s *kicking the tires...* Pay a visit to the campus of a college you’re interested in attending – again, you’re *kicking the tires*.

When you *check it out – try it on – look it over* - you’re *kicking tires*.

And that’s what we plan to do over our next two sessions in 1Timothy.

Last week we popped the hood on the church and noticed its muscle car power. We're God's family - the church of the living God - the pillar and ground of the truth. The church is the most important entity on the planet.

And Paul instructs Timothy on how to *live* and *lead* in the house of God.

Paul writes to his young protégé about calling, and longevity, and order, and character, and doctrine, and function, and kindness – *strategic topics*.

These are the underlying threads we'll tackle in the weeks to come.

But today and next time we're going to do a once-over – we're going to “kick a few tires.” We'll survey three chapters, and learn what lies deeper.

1Timothy begins “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope...”

The term “*apostle*” means “ambassador.” We'll talk about the office of “apostle” later, but the term refers to a man “sent out as a representative.”

And this colored all Paul was, and did, and said. He was always conscious that he represented realities bigger than himself. He represented God, His Lord Jesus, the Gospel, the Church, God's grace...

He writes “to Timothy, a true son in the faith...” It reminds me of Billy, the pastor’s 6 year-old son. At church Billy would always introduce himself as “*Billy Allen, Pastor Allen’s son*”. One night his mom suggested he drop the “*Pastor Allen’s son*” – be his own man – introduce himself as just “*Billy Allen.*”

The next Sunday a visitor asked Billy his name... Following his mom’s advice, he replied, “I’m Billy Allen.” The man replied, “*Billy Allen, oh, you must be Pastor Allen’s son.*” Billy answered, “Well, dad says so, but my mom isn’t so sure.” Hey, unlike Pastor Allen’s wife, Paul had no qualms about advertising the father-son relationship he had with Timothy...

According to Acts 16 Timothy’s natural father was not a believer. And though his mother, Eunice – and his grandma, Lois, were Christians and godly examples... *a mom’s influence only goes so far...* Here’re the stats...

“When a father is an active believer, 75% of the time his kids are active believers. But when mom is the only active believer in the family the odds decrease to 15%.” The *father factor* is crucial in a kid’s spiritual formation.

This is why Eunice jumped for joy when Paul took her young son under his wing. He became a spiritual father to Timothy. And Timothy became Paul’s *faithful friend* and *troubleshooter*. He put out fires for Paul in Corinth, Thessalonica, Philippi, and Ephesus. Timothy became a capable pastor.

Paul greets Timothy, “Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.” When Paul writes to churches he greets them with grace and peace. But when he writes to pastors he adds “*mercy.*”

I can tell you firsthand, a pastor’s *job is harder* - his *responsibilities are greater* - his *judgment will be stricter*...that means he really needs “*mercy.*”

In Acts 19, Paul started the church in Ephesus. It became a successful church, and when he moved on, he put Timothy in charge. Here he writes to Tim, “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia - remain in Ephesus...”

Needless to say, Timothy had some big shoes to fill. Pastoring in the wake of Paul was like taking over for Bear Bryant, or filling in for Billy Graham... And you’ll notice *Tim* was a bit *timid*. He needed a holy nudge.

Throughout the letter Paul follows a pattern. He urges Tim; then praises God. He challenges Timothy to *press on* by getting Timothy to *look up*.

And the first thing Paul urges Timothy to do is to “*remain.*”

On 10/10/10 I’m going to talk to you a bit about the challenges and joys of remaining in the same place and at the same post for 30 years. To my surprise, longevity has brought with it some rewards. In fact, whether it’s a job, a marriage, or a church you’ll find blessings come when you remain.

Paul urges Timothy to remain “that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.”

Falsehoods and **Speculations** were seeping into the church - and Timothy needed to resist both. This is still the central job of a pastor.

Falsehoods *deny* the truth of Scripture. **Speculations** may not deny the Bible, but they *distract*. They take believers down irrelevant rabbit trails.

Bible Codes, and 666 interpretations, and UFOs, and conspiracy theories... are all clever speculation - but they don't encourage godly living or biblical understanding. Paul is saying never let *tabloid* overshadow *truth*.

Our focus should be on the Scripture. For verse 5 tells us its end result.

“Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith...” Christian truth produces love.

Not arrogance... not fear... not elitism... not combativeness... but love!

Live the Bible and you'll **live well**, with a pure heart... you'll **sleep well**, with a clean conscience... and you'll **work well**, with a sincere faith.

But verse 6, “some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which

they affirm.” There were false teachers in Ephesus who promoted legalism. Rather than preach grace, they forced folks to jump through legalistic hoops. They had all kinds of *rules* and *rituals* and *requirements* that went far beyond the Gospel’s demand for simple faith.

Ever heard of *hula hoops*? Beware of *holy hoops*... you got to worship on a certain day, or speak in tongues, or be baptized with in exact formula, or read from a specific version, or vote for a particular party, or educate your kids our way... Do this, avoid that - *or you’re a second class Christian.*

Legalists say, *“Follow our stipulations or you’ll never know God’s best...”* That’s just not true. Faith is not about *toeing a line*, but *following Jesus.*

In verse 8 Paul rebukes the legalists, **“But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully...”** It’s possible to use the Bible in unbiblical ways.

It reminds me of the guy who fell on hard times. He turned to the Bible, closed his eyes, and plopped his finger down on the page. It read *“olive oil.”* He took it as a sign. Invested in Texas oil wells and earned millions.

But soon his wells dried up, so once more he turned to the Bible. Put his finger on the page and read, *“Paul was placed in the stocks.”* It was a sign. He invested in the stock market, and once again became a millionaire.

Of course recently the market has taken a dive, so he again opened his Bible. This time his fingertip landed on

the words, “Chapter 11.” This is why faithful pastors need to teach. False teachers can use the law unlawfully.

Paul comments on the correct use of the Law in verse 9, “knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane...”

The person with *rebellion in his heart* is the one who needs *boundaries for his hands*. You need the *dos and don'ts* if you lack the proper *wants*.

But a Christian has been made a new creation and given new desires. Rather than bound by the Law – a believer needs to be released to love.

Remember, the Law is like an X-ray. It *shows* the break, but it doesn't fix it. “What can wash away my sin? *Nothing but the blood of Jesus!*”

We gain God's favor and forgiveness by faith, and faith alone. *Why live with the Law looking over my shoulder when the Spirit now fills my heart?*

Over the last 30 years I've discovered people live far more godly lives when they're bathed in God's grace than when they're flogged by the Law.

Paul says the Law is not for the righteous, but “for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers...” people who lack God's love.

The law is “For fornicators, for sodomites...” It’s not love to use a person for sexual gratification with no regard to what’s morally best for them.

“For kidnappers,” Love doesn’t take away another person’s freedom.

“For liars, for perjurers,” Love doesn’t deceive or distort the truth.

“And if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.” In short, you can define “*sound doctrine*” as “*God’s love in action.*” Christianity’s emphasis should always be on *love* - not *laws*.

And notice Paul mentions “*the glorious gospel.*” I’m sure when he did it brought a tear to his eyes. He shares a bit of his testimony with Timothy.

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man (or a *bully*); but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”

Notice the words, “*I was formerly...*” What if you wrote a letter and used those words, what would follow? “*Drug dealer... adulterer... hypocrite...*”

There's a line in Pilgrim's Progress. Christian is told, "You must know that Forgetful Green is the most dangerous place in these parts." "*Forgetful Green*" is that grassy bluff where you relax and forget *who you were* and *what you'd be* apart from Christ. It's the place you get *bluffed!* Don't forget.

Paul doesn't. Verse 15, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." In his former life Paul hated Christ and killed Christians.

Now he says, "However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life." With Paul, God established a marvelous precedent... He found the meanest, vilest sinner on the block.

And on the Damascus off-ramp He knocked Paul off his high horse with a bright light. He reached as low as He could go - *turned* the chief of sinners to prove He can *turn* anyone. After *Paul* there's now hope for *all!*

And Paul erupts in praise..."Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

Why remain at your post? Why represent Him well? *Because the King is worthy!* And as is his pattern, this praise is followed by a new challenge...

Verse 18, “This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” All wars have casualties, including the spiritual battle.

Paul mentions two men who “suffered shipwreck.” They denied the faith, and got the right foot of fellowship. They were *booted from the body*.

In my years as a pastor this has only occurred a few times, but on those occasions it was biblical and necessary. We’re going to talk much more about church membership – its **safeguards**, its **privileges**, its **obligations**.

Yet at times the **safeguards and privileges** have to be removed to remind a person of the **obligations**. *Tough love* has a place in *church life*.

Chapter 2 begins, “Therefore I exhort first of all that **supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men...**”

It’s our job to pray. But for whom should we pray? Paul says, “**All men.**”

This has incredible implications. It means no human on earth is outside the influence of prayer. God wouldn’t have told us to pray for “**all men**” if there were *some men*

for whom our prayers had no effect. This is why it's wrong to write anyone off... No one is beyond the reach of our prayers!

Pray for all men, and especially “kings and all who are in authority...”

Recall Paul penned this letter while the most evil tyrant the world has ever seen sat on Rome's throne. Emperor Nero was *the kissing cousin of Adolph Hitler*. He made *Attila the Hun look like a babysitter*. Nero was a nut, *but not a nut that couldn't be cracked* if the church chose to pray!

Biblically speaking, you can disagree with President Obama, *but not before you pray for him...* And how should we pray for our authorities?

Verse 2 outlines the church's political agenda. Here's what to expect from government - “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” The right to vote, tax breaks, moral laws - are icing on the cake. Just be thankful when government stays off your back.

If you're allowed enough peace and quiet to live a godly life, be grateful.

It's always helpful to remember the goal of the church isn't the *Christianization of institutions*, but the *evangelization of individuals*. Pray for government to stay out of our lives – and let us share our faith freely.

Verse 3, “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Some folks think God’s salvation targets a select few. That’s foreign to the NT. The Marines want *a few good men...* God desires “*all men.*”

And He’s appointed a middleman to broker a salvation. “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus...”

If you want your sins forgiven... if you want to know God... neither the Buddha, nor Muhammad, nor Moses, nor Mary, nor Oprah can help you.

There’s one Mediator – and only one – He’s “the Man Christ Jesus...”

And here’s why Jesus can broker salvation - because He “gave Himself a ransom for all...” He died not as a *criminal*, or as a *victim*, or as a *political pawn*, but as a “*ransom.*” His *sinless blood* was the price required for our *sinful life*. Jesus is the ransom God paid for *all the sins*, of *all mankind*.

And now Paul points to Jesus. He was a Pharisee in love with the rules of Judaism, but he *gave up* religion when he realized Jesus “gave Himself a ransom to be testified in due time, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle - I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying - a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.” Paul now preaches a faith he persecuted.

Paul has been talking about “*all men,*” but “*all men*” come in two varieties – **male and female**. And in the last half of chapter 2 Paul instructs both men and women regarding the specific roles each plays in church life.

He says to men, “*I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere...*”

I’m sure he wants women to pray, but here he makes special mention of the men. Men are called to lead – and *good leaders are praying leaders*.

Men should pray, *lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting...*”

Stick a gun in my face, *and what happens to my hands?* They shoot straight up! I surrender!... When a man prays he’s bowing his life to God.

Verse 9 is a word to women, “*In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.*” I taught my daughter to dress *mod but modest*. You can look cool without making the guys *drool*.

Once I saw a teenage girl with a T-shirt that read, “*Modest is hottest.*”

Rather than dress to draw attention to her curves and cleavage, a Christian gal should dress to highlight her inner beauty. Here’s a theme for the next “*Project Runway*” – *mod but modest... Don’t hold your breath...*

Verse 11, Paul says, “**Let a woman learn in silence with all submission.**”

Realize the NT uses three determiners for who ministers in the church – **character, giftedness, gender**. Sadly, today’s church stresses *giftedness*. Paul doesn’t even mention talent. His priority is on *gender* and *character*.

Here Paul says a woman should “***learn in silence with all submission.***”

There’re examples in the NT where women prophesy in church. Paul tells Titus older ladies should teach younger ladies. This is obviously not a strict, absolute silence. It’s an attitude that flows from a submissive spirit.

Paul adds in verse 12, “**And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.**” Here’s what a lot of ladies don’t realize, women have to show restraint if they want men to lead. Ladies, if you’re asserting, and doing the talking, and taking leadership your man won’t fight you for leadership... He’ll let you lead and just go fishing.

Here’s the biblical mandate... In the church and in the home *the man is to lead and hold the authority, and the woman is to support and to follow*. In the eyes of God men and women are equal in righteousness and worth - but they have different roles to play in the church and in the home.

The word in verse 11, “**submission**” means “*to rank under.*” Everyone who’s ever served in the military has met someone of a higher rank who was just plain stupid - who had lesser skills and smarts than you - *but because of military order you submitted.*

This is what God asks of the females in the Christian fellowship. Men are to lead not because they’re better, but because they’re called by God.

Men are called to assume the role of Jesus – *and lovingly lead.* Ladies are commanded to act like the Church - *and willingly follow.* God wants both sexes to *complement* each other – not *compete* with one another.

And please don’t buy into the dribble that these roles were only applicable to the oriental culture of the first century, and don’t apply today.

Paul anticipates this argument in verses 13-14. He says the biblical roles of male and female transcend cultural. He traces them back to creation - the first couple. “**For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.**” Eve usurped her husband’s spiritual authority. Adam was weak and didn’t lead. And the whole human race has suffered ever since.

Yet in the wake of Eve’s disaster women were consoled with a promise of the Savior. Verse 15 explains, “**Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.**”

A literal translation puts it, “**the childbearing.**” Here’s God’s promise, a woman got us into our mess, and a woman helps get us out. Messiah entered the world through a woman. It all comes back to faith in Jesus.

We’ll probe into gender roles in much greater depth. But for now know God takes these matters very, very seriously. They convey profound truth.

Paul begins chapter 3, “**This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.**” The NT uses three titles for a leader - **bishop, elder, pastor.** All three titles refer to the same person.

Here Paul lists an elder’s qualifications. As we read through these traits don’t think of church leaders as an elite band of Christian Special Forces.

An elder is just a mature believer. His specs are what spiritual maturity should look like... *All Christians* need to immolate the traits in Paul’s list.

“A bishop then must be blameless...” Just because he’s preaches well, he can’t be a crook – or cuss out the umpires at the church softball game – or hide from his creditors. He has to live in such a way that earns respect.

It reminds me of the pastor who embezzled \$25,000 of church funds. One of the elders commented, **“We need to find him, and get him back here, so he can work off the money he owes us.”** He’s missed the point.

He should also be “**the husband of one wife.**” Not that he has to be married, or never divorced. Rather at all times his focus is on one woman.

He’s a man with room for only one woman in his *head* - or in his *bed*.

He’s “**temperate.**” It’s the opposite of having a temper. His emotions are in check. He’s “**sober-minded**” or level-headed. He’s a clear thinker.

“**Of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach...**” *Maybe not the book of Revelation in an hour* - but if you want to go to heaven he can tell you how.

“**Not given to wine.**” An elder doesn’t drink alcohol. If he has to make a spur of the moment decision, he can’t afford for his mind to be cloudy.

“**Not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?)**” You can neglect your wife, and beat your kids and still be a good doctor - *but not a good pastor*. If you can’t lead your own family, then you can’t lead God’s family.

“**Not a novice**” or **a new Christian**. And here’s why, “**Lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.**” Often a new believer wins a few early victories, and it heads straight to his frontal lobe.

He thinks the power is in him... *He's wrong*. And if he's a leader - *when he falls, and he will* – sadly, innocent people nearby will go down with him.

Verse 7 puts a wrap on the elder's qualifications. "Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." The church today needs *character*, not *characters*. We're going to talk a lot more about integrity in leadership.

Paul goes on to discuss the qualifications of the deacons, verse 8...

"Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless." Paul recommends a probationary period for a prospective leader. It takes time to observe the real caliber of a man.

Verse 11 begins, "Likewise their wives..." A literal translation is simply "*women*." This either refers to **a deacon's wife** or to **a female deacon**.

The NT lists *deaconesses*. Deacon is a position of *service* not *authority*, thus women served as deacons. It brings a feminine touch to the ministry.

Here Paul lists their character. She “**must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.**” She honors God - monitors her emotions – especially, she controls her tongue. The literal Greek translation of the word “**slanderers**” is “*she-devil.*” Recall the word “*devil*” means “*slanderer.*”

A woman with a wagging tongue can do *devilish damage* to a church.

Verse 12 speaks again of the deacons. “**Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.**” Phillip, Christianity’s first missionary and Stephen, its first martyr – both started out as deacons.

Paul tells Timothy in verse 14, “**These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.**”

Truth is like a house. It provides warm shelter, but a house rests on pillars and footers. In the same way God’s truth is supported by the church.

Only the church teaches and loves God’s truth. We’re its only caretaker.

Verse 16, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness...”

Godliness is like this beautiful, enchanting, mysterious woman. In verse 16 Paul tries to capture her mystique. *Why is the Gospel so attractive?*

“God was manifested in the flesh...” The *Ancient of Days* became a *Child of Time* - the *Infinite* was an *infant*. The Gospel begins with wonder.

Jesus was “justified in the Spirit...” The Holy Spirit worked His miracles.

Jesus was “seen by angels...” For 30-plus years all the angels in the cosmos gazed at Jesus’ every move – amazed that God was now a man.

He was “preached among the Gentiles...” What an unexpected twist. The Gospel was written by Jews, for Jews, about Jews, but almost immediately, the King of the Jews was preached among the Gentiles.

And “believed on in the world...” A Man who never traveled more than 100 miles from His home, has become Lord in every corner of the planet.

And He was “received up in glory.” What began so inconspicuously in the backwoods of Nazareth – in a Bethlehem stable – in the womb of a teenager - *crescendos in the clouds!* The risen Lord ascended to glory!

Here’s Paul’s point, since “great is the mystery of godliness” then *godly* must be the men and women who

guard it! Kick the tires in 1Timothy and a truth stands out,
integrity really does matter! *So here's a final thought...*

If God kicked your tires, would you pass inspection?