

KICKING THE TIRES 2

1TIMOTHY 4-6

During World War 2 automobile tires were in great demand. Most of the tires manufactured in the US were shipped off and used in the war effort.

So if you purchased a car it was important that it came with good tires.

And usually a bad tire – one that couldn't hold the proper pressure – could be identified with a swift kick. Thus, the phrase... “kicking the tires.”

Today, the expression applies to any kind of physical, hands-on inspection. *Examine a used car on the lot... drive by a house you'd like to buy... browse a book you're interested in reading...* “You're kicking tires.”

And that's what we're doing with 1Timothy. In our last study we walked around the first three chapters. We gave 1Timothy 1-3 an once-over.

This week we're going to do the same with chapters 4-6...

And there's one certainty, Paul is gung-ho for the church.

At the end of chapter 3 he calls it “the family of God - the church of the living God - the pillar and ground of the truth.” Paul marvels “great is the mystery of godliness” - and God has entrusted that mystery to His church.

At times observing a church can be deceptive. On the surface we look like a tiny little Smart Car, but pop the hood and there's muscle car power.

Paul is teaching Timothy - and us - how to conduct ourselves in the house of God. The church is *a big deal to God* and it should be *a bigger deal to us*. Today, we're going kick some more tires in 1 Timothy...

And hopefully we'll let God kick our tires!

We don't want to pop under pressure. We want to keep rolling with Jesus. Let's look at the truths God gives us to keep a church on track.

Chapter 4:1, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron." Realize not all that's labeled "*spiritual*" is *godly* or *biblical*.

Walk into the "*Religion and Spirituality*" section at Borders Books, and you'll find titles by everybody from Max Lucado to the Dalai Lama!

Today's world is fascinated with all things "*spiritual*."

New Age Mysticism, Eastern Idolatry, Native American spiritualism, Prosperity Doctrine, Pop Psychology, Conservative Evangelicalism – it's all on the same shelf... *Not everything in that sandwich is equally nutritious.*

In the first three chapters of his letter, Paul tells Timothy to use the Bible biblically – pick out ideas contrary to sound doctrine – fight the fight of faith.

He says elders should be “*apt to teach*” – and the church is “*the pillar and ground of the truth.*” *Why all this emphasis on right doctrine?*

Because the closer we get to the last days, false teaching will abound.

It’s a shock to a new Christian when you realize not every so-called “*Bible teacher*” really teaches biblical truth. Some speak “*lies in hypocrisy.*”

Paul tells Timothy there are “*deceiving spirits*” in the world, and *demons spewing doctrine*. When Satan fell he took a third of the angels with him. These fallen angels are now “*deceiving spirits*” who inspire false teachers.

Their goal is to get you to “*depart from the faith*” - *and they do so by writing books - hosting seminars - appearing on Oprah – creating websites.*

They even wear skinny black ties, ride bikes, and knock on your door.

And here’s Satan’s only advantage in the battle – *he lies shamelessly*. Demonically-inspired teachers tell people *what they want to hear, or what they’d like for you to hear*. Unlike God, Satan has no obligation to the truth.

Don’t say I didn’t warn you! If you open up to “*all things spiritual*” you’ll eventually get visited by one of these evil spirits. We need discernment.

We're going to do a whole week on sound doctrine – but in the next few verses Paul gives us a rundown of what the false teachers emphasize...

They're “forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth...”

The false teacher forbids what God considers good.

Mormons don't drink coffee, but God created coffee beans... *Seventh-day Adventists* are vegetarian, but God created meat – beef and sausage... *Catholicism* denies its priests the opportunity to marry and enjoy a healthy sexual relationship – and it puts undue pressure on the priest...

When God created beans, and meat, and sex - He said it was good.

And He hasn't changed His mind! You please God not by abstinence, but by thanking God for His blessings – then using them for His glory.

Holiness isn't about what *I can give up for God* – it's about what *God gave up to save me!* Biblical spirituality involves the work of Jesus on the cross, and the work of the Spirit in my heart – *not self-effort or self-denial.*

I love what Paul says to Timothy in verse 4, “**For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.**” Thank God for the bowl of

chocolate ice cream before you eat it, and it becomes an act of worship.

Next time you and your wife lock the bedroom door, and get in the hoochy-coochy mood - start by praying and reading some Scripture - *and it's as good as a worship service!* We honor God by enjoying His blessings.

Paul tells Timothy in verse 6, “If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.

But reject profane and old wives' fables...” Paul is talking about superstitions and speculation... Christians get preoccupied with UFOs, conspiracy theories, Mayan prophecies... while their Bible sits on the shelf.

Did you know that even in our modern, technological society, 20 million Americans still carry on their person a rabbit's foot or another type of good luck charm? Paul encourages Timothy to reject these silly superstitions.

He says to Timothy, “and exercise yourself toward godliness...”

Health Clubs work off a business model where they sell far more memberships than their facility can accommodate. Why? Because they know after a few weeks most people no longer visit. *Exercise is hard work!*

And godly exercise is still exercise. Its daily - Bible Study, prayer, getting to church, being involved in a TBG - *and keeping it up for a while.*

Paul adds, “For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” *All exercise* requires effort and discipline – you don’t always feel like running, nor do you always feel like church or studying your Bible.

Godly exercise and *physical exercise* are similar until it comes to their benefits. Visit the gym regularly, and it’ll help you out for a few years. *One day you’ll end up a nice-looking corpse.* But come to church, get into your Bible, hang out with other Christians – and you’ll benefit for all eternity!

I’ve heard it said, “You don’t stop exercising because you grow old. You grow old because you stop exercising.” The same is true with godliness. If your Christian life has grown old, *you’ve stopped working out spiritually.*

Verse 9, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

These things command and teach. Let no one despise your youth...”

At the time, Timothy was in his mid to late 20s - and it was an issue.

When I was younger I ran into folks who refused to attend CC because they wanted an older pastor... Recently, Pastor James told me, since he turned 50 he

thought he could finally pastor - his age gave him credibility.

Yet the truth is, spiritual maturity has very little to do with age.

Paul tells Timothy not to be intimidated because of his youth. There's no age requirement on the calling of God. Jesus uses young and old alike.

Here's good news for a young pastor... *give it time...* your problem will take care of itself! You will get older. In the meantime, there's nothing you can do about your age, but there's a lot you can do about your character.

Paul tells Timothy, **“But be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”** All leaders should be examples.

Paul adds, **“Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”** **“Leaders are readers.”** Timothy needs to study His Bible.

And **“Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.”** God gives us spiritual gifts. Romans 12 lists the gifts of **teaching, leading, mercy, helps, exhortation, giving, prophecy** – but here's the rule – **use it or lose it!**

Timothy needs to revive the spiritual gift God had given him.

“Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

Over the next few weeks I’m going to talk a lot about a pastor’s role. A pastor juggles lots of balls, but there’s one ball a pastor cannot drop. I need to study *thoroughly*, and deliver God’s Word *faithfully*.

Once a pastor told his church, “You can have my feet or my mind, but you can’t have both.” He meant if he was always running to meetings, and hospital visits, and counseling sessions he’d never have the time to give his mind to God’s Word. His teaching is the pastor’s most pressing priority.

Hopefully, you’ll forgive me for missing you in the hospital, *but how can you forgive me if I teach false doctrine and send someone to hell?*

But this is why the church is a family. I might be a big brother, but I’m not the only person in the family. Families are bigger than any one person.

Multiple siblings and parents - take care of one another... And in Chapter 5:1 Paul tells Timothy to make sure the church acts like a family.

“Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger as sisters, with all purity.”

One of the great tragedies of our mobile society is the breakdown of the extended family. Today, the safety net is gone. Too many people are home alone. There's nobody to *learn from* or *lean on*. We lack a support system.

This is why the church needs to function as an extended family. Older folks mentoring younger folks - everyone treating each other like siblings.

And let me state the obvious. This interaction won't happen on Sunday morning. You've got to get involved in a smaller group. You need to join a TBG. This week, break the ice - meet a few folks – start making a family.

And speaking of God's family there were certain members that needed special care. Paul writes in verse 3, **“Honor widows who are really widows.”**

It reminds me of the two ladies sharing a hospital room. One was the wife of an Episcopal priest - the other was a widow. Every day the priest came from church, wearing his clerical collar, to check on his wife. They would talk and talk - then he'd give her a long, passionate hug and kiss.

One day after the priest was gone, the widow in the other bed rolled over and said to her roommate, **“Wow, I've been a member of my church for 50 years and I've never gotten that kind of treatment.”** Apparently, there were a few widows in Timothy's flock that also felt slighted by the church.

In Bible times, 99.9% of the work force was male. A widow had few opportunities at employment. Thus, when the family lost its breadwinner the church had to step in. But here's the question Pastor Timothy faced...

How far does a church go to supply financial help to needy families?

Here're the two truths all churches face. There're **unlimited needs** and we have **limited resources**. That means some discernment is required.

In chapter 5 Paul tells Timothy how to allocate the benevolence.

And notice the overarching principle in verse 3, "**Honor widows who are really widows**. Not all widows are what Paul would call, "*real widows*."

You could also say, not all homeless people are "*really homeless*." Not all poor folks are "*really poor*." Before you can determine their status some investigation is required. A homeless man may be homeless because he gambled away his mortgage. A poor man may've spent his check on boos.

We should never pass out God's money to people who'll use it for evil.

You've got to understand the need, before you help the needy. And Paul tells us how. In coming weeks we'll take an in-depth look at chapter 5. This morning we're just kicking tires. We'll breeze through to get the flavor.

Verse 4 “But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.” Kids need to give back to the woman who nursed them, and changed them, and fed them. An elderly mom is her kid’s responsibility. A church shouldn’t assume somebody else’s responsibility.

The same applies to an able-bodied man. It’s his responsibility to work. Our benevolence should encourage him to get a job, not be irresponsible.

Verse 5 “Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. And these things command, that they may be blameless.” Paul says support the people who are *seeking God* before you try to meet the needs of lost folks who are *dead to God*.

Sometimes our benevolence helps a lost person grow further lost.

I once saw a family rummaging through a Goodwill drop-box. I was feeling sorrow for them, until I watched them load their truck, then roll across the parking lot to the liquor store. We need to avoid assisting folks who are dead to God, when there’re servants of God who need our help.

Notice verse 8, “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has

denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” If you’re an able-bodied man with a job... yet you refuse to work hard, and bring home your paycheck, and support your family God says you’re worse than a blasphemer. *And that’s how this church will treat you!* You’ve got no business calling yourself a “*Christian.*”

But this verse also applies to churches. The church needs to take care of its own. Our first obligation is to our members - then we can reach out.

Paul says in verse 9 “Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.” Some scholars believe the early church had a special order of widows who served fulltime.

To qualify for this ministry you had to put up years of a good testimony.

Verse 11 “But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith.” The long term solution for the younger widows wasn’t a *ministry*, but *marriage*. They needed a husband.

When folks need help they’re usually desperate, and without realizing it we can create in them an unhealthy

dependence on us. The Church isn't the answer – Jesus is the answer. Paul tells Timothy not to bail out a sister who needs to wait and trust God. Give Jesus a chance to meet her need.

“And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not.” Provide all a woman's needs and she may turn to idleness. She ends up a gossip. She watches shop operas and Oprah.

Our benevolence could turn a woman into a Desperate Housewife.

Verse 14 “Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some have already turned aside after Satan.”

Again, the answer for some of the younger gals was to remarry – have a few babies - buy a house - return to the long term task of raising a family.

And verse 16 “If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.” If individual church members can meet certain needs they should - it frees up the church to minister in other ways.

Remember the church is faced with the task of meeting *unlimited needs* with *limited resources* – that’s why we need handle these issues wisely.

Verse 17 changes the subject. “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.” Here’s my favorite verse – *pay the pastor double his salary!*

Just hand him an extra paycheck from time to time. Give him “*double honor.*” As good as that sounds that’s probably not the best interpretation.

If you’ve got a good pastor, who labors in the Word - here’s how to double his pay – give him a **check and respect**. And for me *the respect* is more valuable. This past week many of you sent emails in appreciation of my 30 years of service. I can’t tell you how much your words encouraged me. Trust me, I appreciate my check, but your respect is “*double honor.*”

Paul quotes Deuteronomy 25:4 to support his point. “For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain, the laborer is worthy of his wages.” Even an ox is allowed to eat from the grain he’s grinding. Likewise a pastor should be paid from the fruits of his ministry.

Some churches pray, “Lord, You keep our pastor humble, and we’ll keep him poor.” That’s not God’s attitude. *If he teaches well pay him well.*

Here's another way to honor a pastor or elder, verse 19, "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses."

Church leaders are often the subject of vicious gossip. Satan loves to slander. Remember, *he lies shamelessly*. When someone accuses a pastor make sure the charge gets substantiated. Don't entertain hearsay.

Yet neither should a leader get a free pass. Verse 20 "Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear." Recently CC has exercised church discipline - and more so than a member, when you discipline a leader it sends a wake-up call. No one is above censure.

This is why Paul challenges Timothy, "I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. Do not lay hands on anyone hastily..." In other words, *prove a man before you promote a man!*

It's better to test a man beforehand than discipline him later. Paul warns us all in verse 22... "Nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure."

And then Paul gives Timothy some medical advice. Pastors need to take care of themselves physically. He says, "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities."

Apparently, Tim had a queasy stomach, and Paul prescribes a glass of wine – *a little port for the problem*. Paul is suggesting a few *Tums for Tim*.

Chapter 5 closes, “Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.” Here’s his point - you can’t always judge a book by its cover.

Patience and discernment are needed when sizing up a person.

Chapter 6 “Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved.”

Some historians say there may’ve been as many as 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire – perhaps half the population. Many of the early Christians were slaves. And Paul tells them to be good and productive.

It’s interesting that the NT never launches a frontal assault on slavery.

God *changes institutions by changing individuals*. In hearts where Jesus was enthroned slavery soon passed.

Men control other men because they lack love. And the NT puts an end to slavery with love - not with more laws.

Paul encourages Timothy, “Teach and exhort these things. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.” *Steer clear of greedy folks who use God to pocket a buck!*

These are the guys who teach that God wants you *healthy* and *wealthy*. Make a positive confession, and you’ll be driving your Lexus in no time.

Paul refutes this notion. “Now godliness with contentment is great gain.” Real prosperity is not about money - it’s realizing that Jesus is all I need.

“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.”

“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.” Once, a New Orleans paddleboat sailed up and down the Mississippi.

Gambling was its featured attraction. It was a floating casino.

When the ship sunk its passengers dove into river and swam for shore.

But one man dove in and never surfaced. It seems before he jumped overboard he raced back into the casino and filled his pockets with gold coins. His own greed weighed him down and caused the man to drown.

Paul sums it up, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” The love of money causes people to compromise. The desire for one more, lousy buck is the root of all evil.

“But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” Note the best way to *flee temptation* is to *pursue godliness*. The best defense is a good offense.

Christianity is more than keeping your nose clean. It's proactive. It's *pursuing*, and *fighting*, and *laying hold* of what's good and eternal.

Paul writes, “I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontus Pilate, that you keep this

commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time..."

Jesus is returning to Earth. Question: *when will He come?* Answer: *when it pleases Him to do so!* Our job is to be ready at any moment.

"He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen." We'll need new eyes to handle the brightness of His glory!

Verse 17 "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God...."

Notice, Paul refers to material wealth as "*uncertain riches.*" Checked the stock market lately? It's bearish. The value of a 401K is a bit up in the air!

Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal." Inflation eats it – recession causes rust - taxation steals it away. *Riches are uncertain.*

One man admitted, "Money talks... it tells me good-bye." Don't trust in a fat bank account. One major illness can wipe it out instantly. *Trust in God, "Who gives us richly all things to enjoy..."* God is life's only "*sure thing!*"

“Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” Giving your money to God in this life is a sure way to store up spiritual rewards in the life to come. It’s been said of money, “You can’t take it with you, but you *can* send it on ahead.”

Here’s Paul’s final word – *Stay off the rabbit trails!* “O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge - by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.”

There you have it... we’ve kicked the tires... we’ve learned a church has muscle car power... Next week we celebrate 30 years of ministry, and I’ll take you back to when God handed me the keys... *I hope you’ll be here!*