

Timothy: Paul's Return on Investment

2 Timothy 4:1-5

Timothy took on a large assignment – following in the huge footsteps of Paul. To do this he was submitted to Paul in a mentoring relationship. If we are going to achieve great things, we may need to look around for someone to help us and have the humility necessary to ask for, and submit to, that help. Timothy did this and led perhaps the most effective and influential church in the first century.

But Timothy's church was not without problems. They were plagued by false teachers that were spreading legalism and division. In their teaching they preyed on the weak (especially widows) and sought to make a profit from their teaching.

Paul variously calls Timothy his “beloved and faithful son in the Lord” (1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:22; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2) and his “fellow worker” in the gospel (Rom. 16:21; 1 Thess. 3:2; 1 Cor. 16:10; Phil. 2:22). As his son, he became Paul's most intimate and enduring companion, who followed him closely (1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 3:10-11; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2), shared his point of view (Phil. 2:20) and could articulate his ways to the churches (1 Thess. 3:2-3; 1 Cor. 4:17). As Paul's fellow worker, Timothy had been entrusted with three previous assignments to churches: to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:1-10); to Corinth (1 Cor. 4:16-17; 16:10-11); and to Philippi (Phil. 2:19-24). He also collaborated in six of Paul's letters (1 and 2 Thessalonians, 2 Corinthians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians; Rom. 16:21). In the present letters he is on yet another assignment, this time a most difficult one. He has been left in Ephesus to stop some false teachers who were in the process of undoing the church as a viable Christian alternative for that city.¹

1. Paul's Perspective

A. Instructive

Paul establishes the relationship and gives ministry instructions

1 Timothy 1:2, 3 - remain at Ephesus

¹ Fee, Gordon D. (1984, 1988). *New International Biblical Commentary, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.

To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine,

Paul gives instruction on integrity

1 Timothy 3:14–15 - how one ought to behave in the household of God

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, ¹⁵ if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

Paul gives instruction and encouragement in ministry

1 Timothy 4:11–16 (ESV)

Command and teach these things. ¹² Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. ¹³ Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. ¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. ¹⁵ Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. ¹⁶ Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Paul gives instruction on personal purity

1 Timothy 6:11–12 (ESV)

¹¹ But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith.

Paul's final challenge

1 Timothy 6:20 (ESV)

²⁰ O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge"

B. Supportive

2 Timothy 1:6–7 - fan into flame the gift of God

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, ⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

Begin to teach others

2 Timothy 2:1–2 (ESV)

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

2 Timothy 3:10–15 continue in what you have learned

You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 4:1–5 (ESV)

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, **fulfill your ministry.**

2. Timothy's Perspective

Timothy is often portrayed as young, weak, sickly and shy. But I would like to push back against that. While Paul encouraged Timothy to be bold, this does not mean he was shy.

Paul mentioned Timothy's stomach problem - that does not make him sickly.

Timothy might have been young by some standards, but experts place him in his mid 30s.

Here's what we know of Timothy:

- Timothy was born and reared in Lystra in Lycaonia. Timothy's mother, Eunice, and grandmother Lois were devout Jews who had come to faith in Christ (Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5), but his father was a Greek.
- Timothy's mother and grandmother had carefully taught him the Old Testament Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15),
- Because of Timothy's growth in the faith and his spiritual gifts, Paul chose him to become a partner in spreading the gospel on the second missionary journey (Acts 16:1–3).
- To avoid a problem with the Jews in the area, Paul circumcised Timothy before they left (Acts 16:3).
- Paul also ordained Timothy at this time (4:14).
- Timothy helped establish the churches at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea (Acts 16:1–17:14).
- When Paul left Berea early to go to Athens, he left Timothy and Silas behind. But Paul sent word for them to join him as soon as possible (Acts 17:13–15).
- Soon after Timothy arrived at Athens, Paul sent him to Thessalonica to strengthen the faith of the believers there (1 Thessalonians 3:1–2).
- Later, Timothy rejoined Paul at Corinth and helped establish that church (Acts 18:5).
- Timothy worked with Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19:22). Then Paul sent him (and Erastus) to Greece to minister to churches there and to prepare the

way for a possible visit by Paul, while Paul stayed at Ephesus (Acts 19:22; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10).

- Before Paul left Ephesus, however, Timothy rejoined him (Romans 16:21; 2 Corinthians 1:1). Then they traveled together to Macedonia, to Achaia, back to Macedonia, and on to Asia (Acts 20:1–5).
- After Paul’s release from prison, Timothy traveled with Paul to Ephesus, where he was left to care for the church (1:3—see the possible itinerary on page 5).
- Because of the reference in Hebrews to Timothy being out of prison (Hebrews 13:23–24), there is speculation that Timothy had been imprisoned in Rome and then later released. According to tradition, Timothy was martyred during the reign of either Domitian or Nerva.²

Willing to receive instruction

- Teachable
- Not defensive (can receive instruction on integrity and purity)
- Respond well to a strong challenge

Willing to take responsibility

- Recognize, own, use, and grow in spiritual gifts
- Invest in others
- Self motivated
- Take ownership

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Barton, B. B., Veerman, D., & Wilson, N. S. (1993). *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*. Life application Bible commentary (4–6). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.