

Fighting the Good Fight

Week 42: October 15-21 — *1 Timothy 1-6*

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Helpful Resources

Map of Paul's Missionary Journeys

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

During Paul's second missionary journey, he visited Lystra, a Roman colony in the province of Galatia in Asia Minor. There he met a godly young man named Timothy (*Acts 16:1-3*). Paul chose and prepared Timothy to assist him with his work (*1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; 2:2*). Paul often sent Timothy as his representative to churches. When Paul departed from Ephesus, he left Timothy to shepherd the believers there. Later, he sent a letter to Timothy with instructions for how the church should be ordered and governed.

The local church is a small part of the larger universal (invisible) Church, all the true followers of Christ. God the Father bought the Church with the blood of His Son. The Church is very dear to Him. Since the local (visible) church is an expression of the invisible Church, and it is "the pillar and support of the truth," Satan wants nothing more than to disrupt, distract, derail, and destroy it (*1 Tim. 3:15; Jn. 10:10*). Thus, Paul encouraged Timothy to "fight the good fight," to organize and defend the church, so that it could remain a light for the gospel in the area. In this review, we will reconsider what it means to fight the good fight.

- What Is Required to Be a Church?

The earliest church provided a good example for us to follow (*Acts 2:41-47*).

1. **Location** (*Acts 1:12, 13; 8:3; Col. 4:15; Phi. 1:2; 1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:5*): A local church is a visible gathering of Christ-followers in a certain place (i.e., house, temple).
2. **Leadership** (*Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3; Ti. 1:5-11; Phil. 1:1*): The Disciples and Apostles established a structure of leadership for the church, specifically elders and deacons.
3. **Doctrine** (*Acts 2:41, 42*): The church's instruction manual is the teaching of the Word of God (the Bible), which is comprised of the Old and New Testaments (gospel).
4. **Mission** (*Acts 2:41, 47; Matt. 28:19, 20*): Two of the goals of the church are to lead people to Christ for salvation and to disciple the saved (for spiritual maturity).
5. **Activities** (*Acts 2:41, 42, 44, 47; Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 11:23-26*): Among the many Christian activities (i.e., teaching, worship, prayer, giving, caring, fellowship, serving, etc.), we are to baptize believers and partake of the Lord's Supper.
6. **Standard of Conduct** (*Acts 2:47*): God expects Christians to behave in ways that glorify Him and edify others (i.e., to practice "the one anothers").

- The Good Fight

Paul wrote to Timothy in Ephesus, "In case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God... This command I entrust to you..., fight the good fight, keeping the faith..., which some have rejected..." *1 Timothy 3:15; 6:12*

To fight the good fight first means to obey God's instructions for the church.

1. **Leadership** (*1 Tim. 3:1-13; 5:17-25*): Paul told Timothy to appoint elders and deacons. Elders are overseers, stewards, and pastors of the church, with the responsibilities of leading, feeding (teaching), caring for, and protecting the church. Deacons are servant-leaders who assist elders in the work. Both groups are to be models of godly character, mature in their faith, closely examined, and held accountable by the congregation.
2. **Doctrine** (*1:1-20; 3:14-4:16*): The church is "the pillar and support of the truth" (*3:15*). It is the truth that we are to teach. God's Word is truth. Jesus said, "I am the Truth..." Therefore, it is the truth that we must defend from those who would distort it for their own gain or attempt to take captive undisciplined or undiscerning believers.
3. **Mission** (*1:5, 17; 2:3-7*): Paul stressed the mission to Timothy several times, to share the true gospel in love, so that all may come to the knowledge of the truth.
4. **Activities** (*2:1-4; 5:1-16*): While Paul addressed several activities that should be present in the church (i.e., teaching truth, prayer), he emphasized care for the widows (see also *Acts 6*). The church should have compassion for those who are most vulnerable.
5. **Standard of Conduct** (*1:8-11; 2:5-15; 6:1-21*): Paul instructed Timothy to teach women to be modest and submissive in church. Paul also warned him to guard against greed. Some leaders feign godliness but use it as a means of gain.

- The Not-So-Good Fight

While organizing and defending the church is to fight the good fight, many churches fail at these tasks. Either they fail to choose good leaders, or they do not keep them accountable to biblical teaching or godly behavior. Furthermore, instead of fighting *for* the church, Christians often fight *in* the church. Unity is one of God's expectations for the church. His followers are to fight to protect that unity, but instead they often cause disunity by their infighting.

The Bottom Line

To fight the good fight is to order, instruct, defend, and behave in the church as God instructed.

Questions to Consider

1. How big or small can a church be? What are the pros and cons of each?
2. Could a Bible study turn into a church? What would it require?
3. What are the benefits of a plurality of elders. Why don't more churches have elders?
4. How does your church select, examine, and evaluate deacons and elders? Is it effective?
5. How well does your church care for its vulnerable members (i.e., widows)?
6. Are immodesty, greed, or insubordination problems in your church? How can you tell?
7. Are there signs of infighting at your church? What are the effects? What should you do?
8. What is required of Christians to keep the faith or fight the good fight?