

EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

The Church as God Planned It

1 Timothy 1:1–6, 18–20; 2:1–8; 3:1–13; 4:11–16



LET’S BEGIN HERE

Shortly before his death, Paul wrote three letters on the subject of the local church—specifically on pastoral responsibilities within the church. These letters are 1 Timothy (written in AD 63), Titus (AD 63), and 2 Timothy (AD 67). The Pastoral Epistles, as they are commonly called, provide believers with the earliest and most reliable guidelines for the local church. They dictate the way issues in the church should be handled, the philosophy that should be embraced within the church, and the manner in which the church should be led. Over the centuries, human tradition has often outshouted biblical principles and caused the church to get off course, which has resulted in every conceivable extreme in teaching and in doctrine, including heresy. In this expositional study of 1 Timothy, we return to the source—the Bible—and discover afresh how God planned the church to function.



LET’S DIG DEEPER

1. Some Observations of the Church Today

The local church today is too narcissistic. Our insistence on human tradition instead of biblical truth, worldly success instead of godly success, size instead of depth, and division instead of unification turns the church into a joke. But Jesus is no court jester, and His death and resurrection are no laughing matter.



Quotable

*What the
gospels are
to the life
of Christ,
1 Timothy is
to the life
of the church.*

—Charles R. Swindoll



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1 Timothy 1:1–6, 18–20; 2:1–8; 3:1–13; 4:11–16



DOORWAY TO HISTORY

Remembering Our Historical Bearings

In the book of Acts, Luke ended his historical account of the early church with a cliff-hanger—with Paul cooling his heels under house arrest in Rome, awaiting a hearing with Emperor Nero. The lack of information about Paul’s later life—the outcome of his trial, where he traveled, and when he died—has made dating some of his later letters difficult. First Timothy is one of those letters. Fortunately, Paul’s writings combined with church tradition provide sufficient evidence for us to get our historical bearings before jumping into the details of 1 Timothy.

Paul’s three missionary journeys covered a span of about nine years, AD 48–56 (Acts 13:1–21:17). In AD 56, Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and accused of being an Egyptian revolutionary (21:27–40). Held for about five years, AD 56–60, Paul appeared before various tribunals and courts before he eventually appealed to Caesar (22:1–26:32), which was his right as a Roman citizen. Paul was sent to Rome and spent two years (AD 61–62) under house arrest there (27:1–28:31; Philippians 1:12–14). While chained to praetorian soldiers in Rome, Paul wrote Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians, known as the Prison Epistles. Paul’s release, which probably took place in AD 62, allowed him to travel with Timothy to Ephesus. Then Paul departed, and Timothy remained behind to deal with problems in the Ephesian church. Paul journeyed on to Crete, where he left Titus to deal with that church’s problems. On his way to Spain—a place he had longed to visit (Romans 15:22–25)—Paul paused and ministered in Macedonia in AD 63 and wrote his first letter to his young protégé, Timothy (1 Timothy 1:3).

2. An Overview of the Letter Timothy Received

The six chapters in 1 Timothy divide nicely into a 1-2-3 structure. Chapter one focuses on the relationship between Paul and Timothy. Chapters two and three focus on the business of ministry. And chapters four, five, and six focus on the life of the minister.



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LET’S LIVE IT

The purpose of 1 Timothy is to dispel the fog of confusion in the church about how its members are to live their lives in the world. First Timothy shows us how to live in light of “the mystery of godliness” (1 Timothy 3:16)—how to conduct ourselves as the body of Christ inside and outside the walls of the church (3:15–16). With this in mind, let’s consider four truths that should permeate the activities and attitudes of a local church today.

- *The church should desire to be a twenty-first-century ministry based on first-century principles.* The Bible is ever relevant. Procedures may change but principles do not.
- *There will always be tension between the ideal and the real.* Perfection is unrealistic. We must leave room for failure and brokenness or run the risk of losing grace and compassion.
- *Truth is truth, whether or not it’s modeled.* We hope our ministers are models of truth, but even if they aren’t, the truth still stands.
- *Regardless of the church’s weaknesses, it will not fail.* The church isn’t a perfect place, but no matter its blemishes, Jesus’ promise in Matthew 16:18 holds firm.

After completing this overview of 1 Timothy, in what ways is this first-century letter relevant and applicable to your twenty-first-century church?



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1 Timothy 1:1–6, 18–20; 2:1–8; 3:1–13; 4:11–16

FIRST TIMOTHY

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Greeting (1:1–2) | Personal Encouragement and Exhortation | The Ministry | The Minister | Conclusion (6:21) |
| | <u>Timothy’s task</u> <u>Paul’s testimony</u> <u>Gospel’s trustworthiness</u> | Men and women (2) (Prayer and submission) Elders and deacons (3) (Qualifications for leadership) | Seeing the importance of (4): <u>Faithful teaching</u> <u>True godliness</u> <u>Sound doctrine</u> <u>Perseverance</u> Paying attention to (5): <u>Various age groups</u> <u>Elders</u> <u>Widows</u> <u>Wisdom</u> Developing a new perspective toward (6): <u>Masters and slaves</u> <u>Internals and externals</u> <u>Rich and poor</u> <u>Eternal vs. temporal</u> | |
| | CHAPTER 1 | CHAPTERS 2–3 | CHAPTERS 4–6 | |
| Emphasis | The work of ministry | | The one who ministers | |
| Command | Be true! | Be wise! | Be strong and faithful! | |
| Theme | Leadership of the church, the household of God | | | |
| Key Verses | 3:14–15 | | | |
| Christ in 1 Timothy | Jesus is the Mediator between God and people, the ransom for all, who came in the flesh and was taken up in glory (2:5–6; 3:16). | | | |

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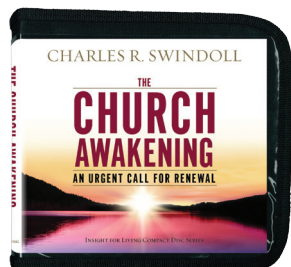
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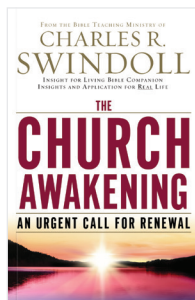
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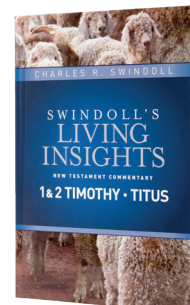
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Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

What’s a Pastor to Do?
1 Timothy 1:1–11, 18–20



LET’S BEGIN HERE

First Timothy, the flagship of Paul’s “pastoral” letters, defines the role of the pastor and the function of the church. Our goal is to learn from this first-century epistle about some of the concerns and pitfalls of ministry and apply God’s instructions to the twenty-first-century church. This study offers insight on the theology of ministry based on biblical guidelines—as opposed to human experience, opinion, prejudice, culture, or personal preference. Let’s keep a keen eye on what is written in God’s Word and then do our best to let it shape our thinking.



LET’S DIG DEEPER

1. Warm Words to a Close Friend (1 Timothy 1:1–2)

Paul was a Jewish apostle, one who had seen the resurrected Christ and was commissioned by Him for service. Timothy was the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother (Acts 16:1). After being circumcised, Timothy accompanied Paul when he left Lystra (16:3). From that time on, Timothy became Paul’s spiritual son—Paul’s *genesios* or genuine son in the faith—and helped Paul evangelize Macedonia, Achaia, and Ephesus (17:14–15; 18:5; 19:21–22).

2. Wise Counsel from a Seasoned Veteran (1 Timothy 1:3–11, 18–20)

Paul’s first letter to Timothy is filled with practical advice for ministry and ministers. And Paul wasted no time in dispensing words of wisdom to the young pastor in Ephesus, giving him five commands applicable for pastors today.

- Stay at the task.



Quotable

Stay at the task.

*Communicate
the truth. Watch
your target.*

*Remember the
standard. Obey
God’s commands.*

—Charles R. Swindoll



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EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

What’s a Pastor to Do?

1 Timothy 1:1–11, 18–20

- Communicate the truth.
- Concentrate on the target.
- Remember the standard.
- Obey the command.



A CLOSER LOOK

Handed Over to Satan?

Paul’s ministry was not easy. From the moment of his conversion, after he was struck blind on the Damascus road, to the moment he was beheaded in Rome, Paul knew hardship. He provided a graphic pen portrait of his ministry in 2 Corinthians 11:23–33. Some of the hardships Paul faced included “dangers among false brethren” and “the daily pressure . . . of concern for all the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:26, 28). Paul was on the front lines of opposition.

Some of the most troubling opposition came from Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Timothy 1:20). Alexander likely joined in the teaching of Hymenaeus’ heresy, which was just old-fashioned Gnosticism. Greek philosophers viewed the soul as immortal and the body as the soul’s temporary prison. The bodily resurrection of Christ and Christians, therefore, was not only foreign to the Greek mind, it was foolishness. Hymenaeus probably taught that the spirit was resurrected at conversion or at baptism but that believers shouldn’t look forward to a bodily resurrection.

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Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

What’s a Pastor to Do?

1 Timothy 1:1–11, 18–20

Continued from previous page

So, when Hymenaeus and Philetus—and presumably Alexander—taught that “the resurrection has already taken place,” they denied the bodily resurrection of Christ (2 Timothy 2:18). But Paul made it clear in 1 Corinthians 15 that if Christ did not rise in bodily form, then our salvation is in vain.

Presumably, Paul tried to correct Hymenaeus and Alexander, but they “rejected” sound doctrine and the testimony of their consciences and thereby “shipwreck[ed] . . . their faith” (1 Timothy 1:19). Because their teaching and example would have been dangerous to the church at Ephesus, Paul “handed [them] over to Satan” (1:20). This is a curious phrase. Paul didn’t mean he handed them over to Satan literally. Rather, Paul meant he excommunicated them from the church, exposing them to the realm of satanic influence. Those outside the church are not under the spiritual protection of the body of Christ and, in this way, are exposed to the dangers of sin. Paul used a similar phrase in 1 Corinthians 5:5. In both cases, the intent of the disciplinary measure was to bring about repentance and return to true fellowship (1 Timothy 1:20).



LET’S LIVE IT

Hymenaeus and Alexander serve as warnings to all in ministry—failure to heed Paul’s five commands can lead to disillusionment and disaster. Those who lean on myths and listen to persuasive but ignorant teachers who espouse heretical doctrines will find their lives and their ministries thrown into confusion. But those who lean on Christ Jesus, our hope, and listen to His Word will find their lives and their ministries filled with confidence. Confusion or confidence—it all depends upon who you trust and who has your ear. Therefore, *be very careful where you lean and to whom you listen.*

On whom do you lean and to whom do you listen for spiritual advice? Do the individuals you listed adhere to Paul’s five commands for ministry? How so? If not, how might God have you respond?



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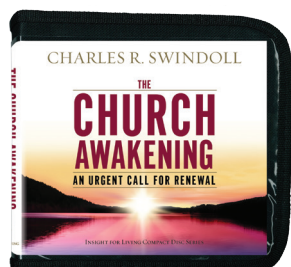
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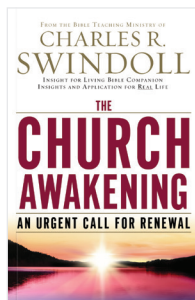
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1 Timothy 1:1–11, 18–20



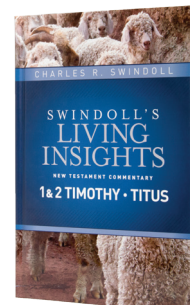
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EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

Undeserved Mercy for an Unbelieving Rabbi

1 Timothy 1:12–17



LET’S BEGIN HERE

One of the benefits of studying a New Testament letter is the opportunity to become better acquainted with the writer himself—in this case, Paul the apostle. In this brief vignette (a mere six verses), we don’t read of Paul’s role and ministry as an apostle—strong in faith and unswerving in dedication. Rather, we read of Paul—called Saul—before his conversion to Christ. Saul was “a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor” who, by his own admission, “acted ignorantly in unbelief (1 Timothy 1:13). Ironically, Saul was a religious zealot, an intense rabbi, sincere to the core . . . but sincerely wrong. And so? Mercy came to the rescue!



LET’S DIG DEEPER

1. The Gospel That Is Glorious (1 Timothy 1:11)

Before he became the great apostle Paul, he was the great blasphemer Saul. He was the Chuck Colson of his day—the hatchet man for the Jewish rulers. But that all changed when he encountered the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. The Apostle Who Was Thankful (1 Timothy 1:12–17)

We tend to think of the apostles as wearing halos and serene countenances, endlessly gazing up into the celestial realm. Wrong! The apostles were earthy, ordinary men who had little patience for pious posturing. In fact, they were so average and sinful, they were more surprised than anyone that God would entrust the gospel to them. And this was especially true of the apostle Paul.



Quotable

*God’s glorious
gospel can
change lives,
and He’s deposited
the good news
in our hands.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What's Right in the Work of Ministry

Undeserved Mercy for an Unbelieving Rabbi
1 Timothy 1:12–17



LET'S LIVE IT

When's the last time you gave God sheer, unadulterated praise—honor and glory—for the mercy He's shown in your life? Just as no one can ignore or deny the power of a changed life, so no one whose life has been changed by the mercy of God can remain unmoved or ungrateful.

Write your own doxology or hymn of praise to God for the mercy and grace He's shown you.



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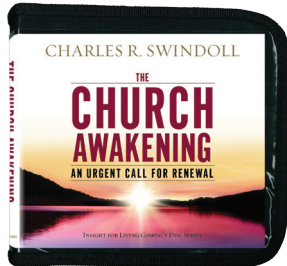
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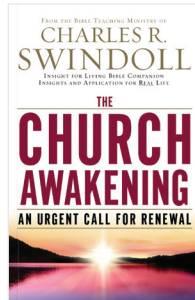
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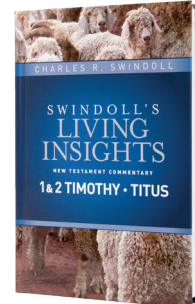
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EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

What’s First in a Meaningful Ministry?

1 Timothy 2:1–4, 8



LET’S BEGIN HERE

A successful industrialist once addressed a large body of executives. Speaking on the topic “Following the Leader,” he revealed two difficulties most leaders face. First, leaders struggle with getting people to think—to really think. Second, leaders struggle with getting people to establish and maintain priorities. This message focuses on the second challenge—establishing and maintaining priorities for a meaningful ministry. What’s true in business is true in the church and in the home. We all wrestle with doing things in order of importance. One of the reasons for this struggle is that we often don’t know what deserves our immediate attention. For ministry, our first priority is clear: prayer.



LET’S DIG DEEPER

1. Common Misconceptions about Prayer

Prayer must be our top priority. It is the first of the first things in our spiritual lives. Nevertheless, many people have unbiblical notions when it comes to prayer. Four misconceptions seem to dominate.

- Turning prayer into a public performance
- Limiting prayer to a specific time and place
- Using prayer as a substitute for action
- Making prayer a last-resort option



Quotable

*In our prayer
time with God,
it’s helpful
to turn our
grumbling into
gratitude.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

What’s First in a Meaningful Ministry?

1 Timothy 2:1–4, 8

2. God’s Directives Regarding Prayer (1 Timothy 2:1–4, 8)

We’ve seen that prayer is the first of the first things. But what exactly is prayer? Whom should we pray for? Why, besides obeying God’s command, should we pray? And how do we go about praying? Paul addressed all these questions in his letter to Timothy.

What exactly is prayer?

Whom should we pray for?



A CLOSER LOOK

Prayer as a Civic Duty

Jeremiah commanded God’s people to work and pray for peace—*shalom*—in our city, state, and nation (Jeremiah 29:7). Paul echoed this same sentiment in 1 Timothy 2:1–2. Following the lead of Jeremiah and Paul, some of the early church fathers instructed the church to continue the practice, even under the most unlikely circumstances.

To our rulers and governors on the earth—to them Thou, Lord, gavest the power of the kingdom by Thy glorious and ineffable might, to the end that we may know the glory and honour given to them by Thee and be subject to them, in nought resisting Thy will; to them, Lord, give health, peace, concord, stability, that they may exercise the authority given to them without offence.¹

—Clement of Rome, ca. AD 96, during the brutal reign of Domitian

Wherefore I will rather honour the king [than your gods], not, indeed, worshipping him, but praying for him. But God, the living and true God, I worship, knowing that the king is made by Him. You will say, then, to me, “Why do you not worship the king?” Because he is not made to be worshipped, but to be revered with lawful honour, for he is not a god, but a man appointed by God, not to be worshipped, but to judge justly. For in a kind of way his government is committed to him by God. . . . Accordingly, honour the king, be subject to him, and pray for him with loyal mind; for if you do this, you do the will of God.²

—Theophilus, ca. AD 181, shortly after the death of Marcus Aurelius, during the reign of his notoriously capricious and corrupt son, Commodus

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What’s First in a Meaningful Ministry?

1 Timothy 2:1–4, 8

Continued from previous page

Without ceasing, for all our emperors we offer prayer. We pray for life prolonged; for security to the empire; for protection to the imperial house; for brave armies, a faithful senate, a virtuous people, the world at rest, whatever, as man or Caesar, an emperor would wish.³

—Tertullian, AD 160–225, written during the reign of Septimius Severus,
a brutal persecutor of Christians.

Why, besides obeying God’s command, should we pray?

How do we go about praying?



LET’S LIVE IT

The priority of prayer in the life of any believer, not just the professional ministry leader, should be paramount. As Paul made clear, making prayer a priority leads to a peaceful life, brings glory to God, and may cause others to respond to the gospel. Therefore, in making prayer a priority in our lives, let’s *form a habit* of praying, *set no limits* on our prayers, and *resist all substitutes* to prayer.

How does your prayer life compare with the commands in 1 Thessalonians 5:17–18 and 1 Timothy 2:1–4, 8? And what, if anything, can you do (must you do) to make prayer the top priority in your life?

ENDNOTES

1. Clement of Rome, “1 Clement,” 61, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, ed. and trans. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 10:247, quoted in Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy*, Titus, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2014), 36.
2. Theophilus, “Theophilus to Autolycus,” 1.11, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:92, quoted in Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy*, Titus, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2014), 36.
3. Tertullian, “The Apology,” 30, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:42, quoted in Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy*, Titus, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2014), 37.



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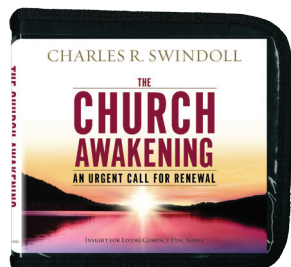
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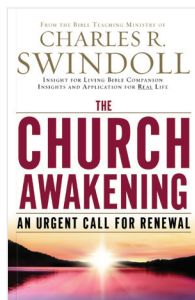
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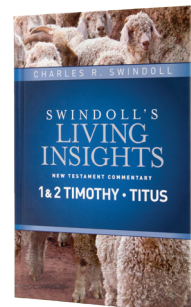
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MM04

EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

God’s Desire, Man’s Debt, Christ’s Payment
1 Timothy 2:3–7



LET’S BEGIN HERE

It’s easy to forget foundational truths. We are so familiar with them, we tend to take them for granted. This is especially true of salvation. Some of us have walked with Christ for so long, the joy of our salvation wanes more than it waxes. It’s not that we’re ungrateful; it’s just that we’re forgetful. In the work-a-day world of daily life, it’s simple to overlook the significance of the gospel. Paul, of course, never did, and in this section of 1 Timothy—one of the most practical and clearest presentations of the gospel in the New Testament—he challenges us to open our eyes and our hearts, once again, to its wonder.



LET’S DIG DEEPER

1. What’s So Important about a Mediator?

Mediation is as old as humanity. The first mediator was God. When Adam and Eve sinned, God sacrificed an animal and made clothes for them, covering not only their physical shame but their spiritual shame as well (Genesis 3:21). Our need for a divine mediator is further developed in the book of Job.

2. How Does This Relate to the Gospel (1 Timothy 2:3–7)

The gospel is so simple a child can understand it. Yet it’s so profound a philosopher can’t comprehend it. At its heart, the gospel can be spoken in a few words. “The Son of Man,” Jesus said, “has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). “To seek and to save”—there you have it, the gospel in a nutshell. Or as Paul put it: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). Easily said. But what does all this have to do with mediation? Everything.



Quotable

God is holy. We are unholy. That’s why we need a mediator in order for God to accept us. That mediator is Jesus.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

God’s Desire, Man’s Debt, Christ’s Payment
1 Timothy 2:3–7



A CLOSER LOOK

The Shocking Truth of Jesus—the God-Man

In Mary’s womb, divinity slipped on the suit of humanity. The divine Word became human flesh (John 1:1, 14). In theological jargon, Jesus became (and is) the *theoanthropic* person—the God-Man. In Him, absolute deity was fused with absolute humanity—humanity as God intended: without sin. Theologians call this welding of two natures—heavenly and earthly—into one person the “hypostatic union.” In the unipersonality of Jesus, the hypostasis, the essential natures of both God and man are unified in perfect harmony.

Confounding, isn’t it? Mysterious. Shocking, even. Theologians struggle to make sense of it . . . and fail. But since its earliest days, the church has affirmed this truth. In AD 451, church fathers met at Chalcedon and declared:

We unite in teaching all men to confess the one and only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This selfsame one is perfect both in deity and also in human-ness; this selfsame one is also actually God and actually man, with a rational soul and a body. He is of the same reality as God as far as his deity is concerned and of the same reality as we are ourselves as far as his human-ness is concerned . . . sin only excepted. Before time began he was begotten of the Father, in respect of his deity, and . . . born of Mary the virgin . . . in respect of his human-ness.¹

Modern-day theologians fill thousands of pages trying to unravel the mystery. But the hypostatic union remains just as incomprehensible and shocking. Like the church fathers of old, we are left to boldly declare its truth.

He was weary; yet He called the weary to Himself for rest. He was hungry; yet He was “the bread of life.” He was thirsty; yet He was “the water of life.” He was in agony; yet He healed all manner of sicknesses and soothed every pain. He “grew, and waxed strong in spirit”; yet He was from all eternity. He was tempted; yet He, as God, could not be tempted. He was self-limited in knowledge; yet He was the wisdom of God. . . . He dies; yet He is eternal life. . . . His earth-life, therefore, testifies as much to His humanity as to His Deity, and both of these revelations are equally true.²



EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

God’s Desire, Man’s Debt, Christ’s Payment
1 Timothy 2:3–7



LET’S LIVE IT

The foundation of our faith is that Jesus, the mediator between holy God and unholy humanity, gave His life on the cross as a willing sacrifice to atone for our sins and offer us peace with God. Pleased with Jesus’ sacrifice, God raised Him from the dead and promises heaven for all who believe (1 Thessalonians 4:14). It’s that simple. Yet this bedrock truth points to three other important truths.

First, *it reveals the heart of God.*

Second, *it announces the plan of salvation.*

Third, *it verifies and validates world evangelism and missions.*

Using your own words and style, write the gospel in one short, succinct sentence.

ENDNOTES

1. “The Definition of Chalcedon,” trans. Albert C. Outler, as quoted in *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present*, 3rd ed., ed. John H. Leith (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 35–36.
2. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Chafer Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena, Bibliology, Theology Proper* (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary Press, 1983), 369, 70.



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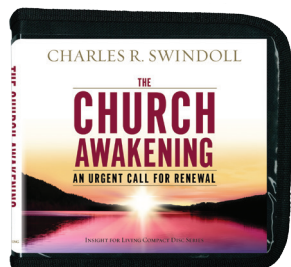
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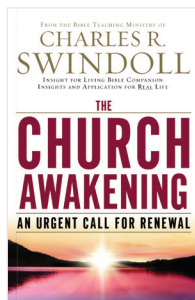
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1 Timothy 2:3–7



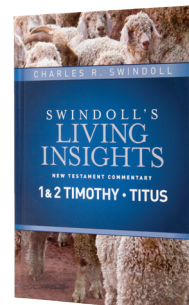
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EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What's Right in the Work of Ministry

What about Women in the Church?

1 Timothy 2:9–15



LET'S BEGIN HERE

The role of women in the church is a hot issue, best handled with sensitivity and compassion—and maybe a pair of asbestos gloves! This is not because Scripture is controversial but because the role of women in the culture is different from what Scripture teaches about the role of women in the church. So, questions rise like steam from a boiling kettle. What positions should women hold within the church? Can they serve as elders and be ordained to preach? Can women pray in mixed company? Or should they remain quiet altogether? Some say women can serve in the highest office of church leadership. Others muzzle women, treating them as second-class citizens. What does the Bible say?



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. What about Today's Woman?

In 1968, a new cigarette brand was introduced and marketed to young, business-savvy women—Virginia Slims. The tagline was “You’ve come a long way, baby.” It’s true, women had made considerable strides at that time, and women’s rights have continued to advance in the generations since. Let’s examine four general areas of change, some positive and some negative.

First, *in the world, women have become liberated more than restrained.*

Second, *on the job, women have become respected more than exploited.*

Third, *around the home, women have become assaulted more than supported.*

Fourth, *at the church, women have become confused about their roles more than informed and affirmed.*



Quotable

*Sometimes it's
tough for women
in today's church
to know where they
fit. That really
shouldn't be.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What's Right in the Work of Ministry

What about Women in the Church?

1 Timothy 2:9–15

2. What Does the Bible Say about Women in Church? (1 Timothy 2:9–15)

When the church takes its cues from the culture, the church becomes culturally irrelevant. It loses its saltiness and its light (Matthew 5:13–16). The church is culturally relevant when the church is countercultural. And few things are more countercultural than the Bible's take on the role of women in the church.

Several Major Passages Addressing Women in the Church

What's Expected Regarding a Woman's Appearance and Behavior (2:9–12)

Why It's Expected, Based on the Order of Creation and the Issue of Deception (2:13–15)



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What about Women in the Church?

1 Timothy 2:9–15



LET'S LIVE IT

The subject of a woman's role in the church will always be controversial. People will always tend to misinterpret and misapply the clear, sensitive teaching of the Bible. So, we need a few clarifying remarks before we end this message.

First, men, these limitations on a woman's role in the church are to be respected—not exaggerated, expanded, or exploited.

Second, women, your positive response to this teaching helps the church maintain its distinctiveness.

Women, what, if anything, do you need to change—in your appearance, your attitude, or your actions—to become obedient to Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 2:9–15?

Third, those who take their cues from the world will neither accept nor appreciate this teaching.



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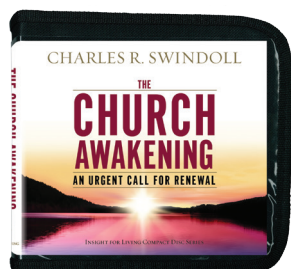
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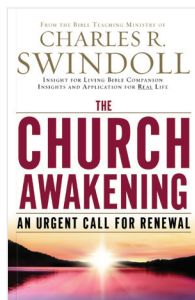
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1 Timothy 2:9–15



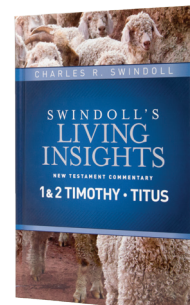
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EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

Checklist for Choosing Church Leaders

1 Timothy 3:1–7



LET’S BEGIN HERE

God doesn’t always spell out things in stark, “thou shalt” terms. He did in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17; Deuteronomy 5:6–21), but most of God’s Word is filled with stories, prophecies, proverbs, psalms, and biographies. When we get to the epistle of 1 Timothy, however, we discover virtually a whole chapter devoted to a black-and-white list requiring little interpretation but a lot of application. In 1 Timothy 3:1–7, Paul put his finger on the essential qualities God looks for in overseers—qualities as applicable for church leaders in the twenty-first century as they were in the first century. We’ll look at the first two verses in this message and the last five in the next message.



LET’S DIG DEEPER

1. Erroneous Methods of Selecting Church Leaders

Organizations tend to take on the personality of the person at the top. Leadership is expressed through individual action, and action is rooted in values, and values color and control what is championed in the organization. This is why the selection of church leaders, especially those for the highest office of overseer, is so important. Unfortunately, some churches fail to turn to Scripture to find out what God requires of His leaders. Instead, these churches rely on four erroneous methods—four “Ps”— to select leaders.

- First, *popularity* motivates congregations to select and retain leaders.
- Second, *posterity* compels congregations to stick to those who are tried-and-true.
- Third, *politics* persuades congregations to elect leaders who are well connected.
- Fourth, *prosperity* sells congregations a bill of goods.



Quotable

*A church lives
because its people
are spiritually
alive. A church dies
because its people
are spiritually dead.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

Checklist for Choosing Church Leaders

1 Timothy 3:1–7

2. Checklist for Selecting Church Leaders (1 Timothy 3:1–2)

Churches that select leaders based on the four “Ps” mentioned above have not read and obeyed the Word of God. In 1 Timothy 3:1–7, the Lord created His own rules for church leaders. And all leaders in high office who wish to serve God’s people must follow these rules.



GETTING TO THE ROOT

The Noble Task of Overseeing God’s Church

The Greek word translated “overseer” is *episkopos*. In reference to church leaders, it occurs five times in the New Testament (Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1, 2; Titus 1:7). According to one scholar, “the word came originally from secular life, referring to the foreman of a construction gang, or the supervisor of building construction.”¹

The word *overseer* is often interchanged with *elder* (*presbyteroi*), especially when both words appear in the same letter (1 Timothy 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5). Nevertheless, each word carries its own nuance. The term *elder* portrays leaders from the perspective of *position*—older men in the church, who have the wisdom and experience to lead the church. The term *overseer* portrays leaders from the perspective of *function*—men who were to superintend, exercise authority over, or care for the spiritual life of the church.

The position of overseer required one to teach and preach (1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17), to direct the affairs of the church (3:5; 5:17), and to shepherd (or “pastor”) the flock of God (Acts 20:28). And any man who desires such a position is worthy of praise (1 Timothy 3:1).

Above Reproach

The Husband of One Wife

Temperate

Prudent



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Checklist for Choosing Church Leaders

1 Timothy 3:1–7

Respectable

Hospitable

Able to Teach



LET’S LIVE IT

Whether or not churches admit it, when it comes to selecting overseers, many place more weight on the four “Ps” than they do on the seven spiritual qualities found in 1 Timothy 3:1–2. Those churches shouldn’t be surprised when their spiritual vitality drains away. Nor should they be shocked when their congregations fall into bitterness, finger pointing, and political intrigue. Leadership is the lifeblood of a church, and a leader’s character is the heartbeat of a church. Therefore, follow these suggestions when selecting leaders.

Be careful.

Be realistic.

Be aware.

How does your church select leaders?

ENDNOTE

1. Kenneth S. Wuest, “The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament,” in *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 52.



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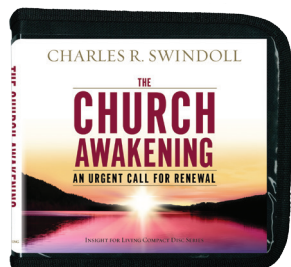
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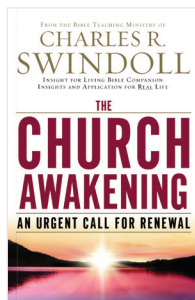
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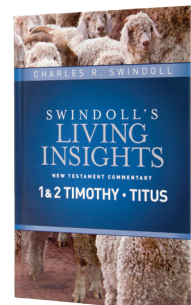
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EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

Another Look at the Checklist
1 Timothy 3:3–7



LET’S BEGIN HERE

You can’t escape it: a Christian’s conduct matters . . . greatly. Christ’s reputation is on the line, and nonbelievers are watching. This makes God’s “gamble” seem crazy—that sinful, Spirit-filled people are called to lead His church. Is it any wonder then that He decrees that His leaders be above reproach? Not at all. In lesson 7 we looked at the first two verses of 1 Timothy 3 and seven character qualities every overseer must demonstrate. In this message we’ll explore verses 3–7 and seven more character traits. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul continued to set forth in plain, uncomplicated language the non-adjustable, non-alterable essentials of God’s standard for church leadership.



LET’S DIG DEEPER

1. A Brief Word Regarding Leadership Lists

We love it when God spells out in an A-B-C-like fashion exactly what He expects of His leaders. First Timothy 3:1–7 is one of those places. But 1 Timothy isn’t the only place in the New Testament where God provided a list of leadership qualities. The others are found in Titus 1:5–9 and 1 Peter 5:1–4.

The practical implications of these leadership lists are twofold. First, God requires explicit qualities that all leaders must demonstrate in their lives before they can lead God’s people.

Second, these lists refer to character traits, not spiritual giftedness.



Quotable

*When it comes
to selecting
leaders, God is
more interested
in character than
giftedness.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

Another Look at the Checklist

1 Timothy 3:3–7

2. A Continuation of Leadership “Musts” (1 Timothy 3:3–7)

We might deem the character qualities in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 as “the great musts” for church leaders. Every leader in high position in God’s church—pastors and overseers—must demonstrate each of these traits consistently in every area of his life. In the previous message, we looked into the overseer’s inner life (1 Timothy 3:1–2). In this message, we’ll continue our focus on his inner life (3:3) as well as his home life (3:4–5), his church life (3:6), and his life among unbelievers (3:7).

Not Addicted to Wine

Not Pugnacious

Gentle and Peaceable

Free from the Love of Money

One Who Manages His Household Well

Not a New Convert

A Good Reputation with Those Outside the Church



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Starting Strong—Doing What's Right in the Work of Ministry

Another Look at the Checklist

1 Timothy 3:3–7



LET'S LIVE IT

It might come as a surprise to discover that some of your church's pastors and overseers may have been elected or appointed because they look like leaders on the outside but, in fact, are not qualified on the inside. It's easier to ask questions about a person's business success than about his spiritual success. But God isn't interested in an overseer's business success, not when it comes to serving God's people. God is concerned about an overseer's spiritual success, and so should we. So when it comes to selecting leaders in your church, you should ask at least three questions.

Personally, does this man's internals square with his externals?

Domestically, would this man's family vote for him?

Publicly, will this man's nomination come as a surprise or be affirmed in the community?

Whether or not your church is in the midst of selecting new leaders, think about these three questions in light of your current leaders and evaluate them with grace.



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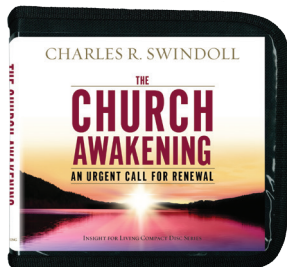
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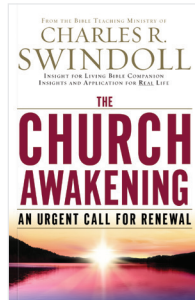
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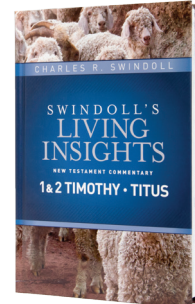
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EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

The Dignity of Servanthood

1 Timothy 3:8–13



LET’S BEGIN HERE

You can’t put a price on a good name. An honored and respected reputation is worth more than “silver and gold” (Proverbs 22:1). In fact, we could write in bold letters this very proverb across the last couple of messages of this sermon series—the ones dealing with the necessary qualities for the office of overseer (1 Timothy 3:1–7). We could do the same in this message, too, because a sterling reputation for those who serve as deacons in God’s church is just as essential (3:8–13).



LET’S DIG DEEPER

1. Deacon: A God-Given Title

Nicknames can be fun, but sometimes they can be ugly and cruel—and not just in the hands of children. Sometimes coworkers and neighbors give us unflattering nicknames, especially if they know we follow Jesus and adhere to a certain moral code. Names like “parson,” “friar,” or “deacon” are popular ones. Little do the mockers know that “deacon” isn’t a negative nickname; it’s a God-ordained title that comes straight from the Bible.

2. Deacons: Analysis of True Servants (1 Timothy 3:8–12)

By twenty-first century standards, the Jerusalem congregation of the first century was a “mega church.” Within thirty years of its founding, the church, in many ways, looked and functioned like a modern-day church. And what began as a necessity to meet a need at the beginning of the church—the need for deacons to serve widows—had, by the time Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy, become an established office within the church.

Men of Dignity



Quotable

*For the
Christian, the title
“servant” is a
compliment.
Why? Jesus was
God’s servant.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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MM09

EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

The Dignity of Servanthood

1 Timothy 3:8–13

Not Double-Tongued

Not Devoted to Much Wine

Not Fond of Sordid Gain

Clear Conscience

Beyond Reproach

Women . . . Likewise



A CLOSER LOOK

Women Elders, No. Women Deacons, Yes.

Paul made it clear that within the confines of the faith community, women were not permitted “to teach or exercise [spiritual] authority over a man” (1 Timothy 2:12). And because this was a primary responsibility of overseers (3:2, 5), the clear implication is that women are to be excluded from serving in that office. But does this mean women are excluded from all official positions within the church?

First Timothy 3:8–10, 12 refers to the qualifications of *male* deacons, but verse 11 seems to refer to the qualifications of *female* deacons: “Women must likewise be dignified.” What are we to make of this reference? Scholars are divided on how best to interpret verse 11, offering three alternatives.

First, *the verse refers to women in general*. This seems unlikely because Paul already made a universal statement about women in the congregation (2:9–15). Sandwiching a general comment in the middle of a specific list regarding deacons seems schizophrenic.

Continued on next page



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Continued from previous page

Second, *the verse refers to the wives of deacons (or perhaps to all church leaders, including overseers)*. The Greek noun *gyne* can be translated “wives” or “women,” depending on the context. According to some interpreters, Paul was speaking about the wives of men in church leadership, since they serve alongside their husbands. However, this view has its problems. The possessive pronoun *their*—as in, “their wives”—appears nowhere in the original language. Paul took care to identify his subjects in other places. It would be out of character, therefore, for him to be ambiguous here. And the phrasing of verse 11 parallels verse 8 almost exactly, especially with the use of the word *likewise*, indicating that *women* and *deacons* are synonymous (and not a reference to deacons’ or overseers’ wives).

Third, *the verse refers to women who serve as deacons—deaconesses*. This interpretation makes better sense of the parallels between 1 Timothy 3:8 and 11. This view also makes sense because in the early church deacons didn’t exercise spiritual authority over the church; deacons served the congregation. Furthermore, this interpretation better fits the context—that deaconesses, like deacons, must demonstrate godly character. Specifically, deaconesses are to be women of respect, honesty, self-control, and trustworthiness.

Husband of One Wife . . . Good Manager



LET’S LIVE IT

Servants are rarely heralded with praise. They usually do their work unseen and unknown. But in Paul’s conclusion, he conferred two laurels, respect and reward, on all those who “serve tables”—those men and women “who have served well” (1 Timothy 3:13).

Deacons “obtain for themselves a high standing.”

Deacons also “obtain for themselves . . . great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.”

In what ways does your church demonstrate that it holds deacons in high regard?



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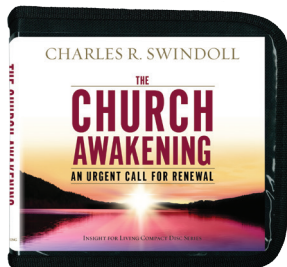
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The Dignity of Servanthood

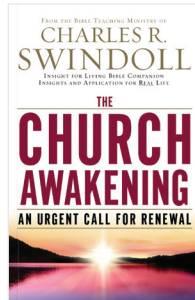
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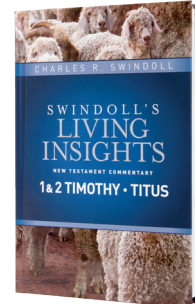
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EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

A Hope, a House, a Hymn
1 Timothy 3:14–16



LET’S BEGIN HERE

We could consider 1 Timothy *the* handbook on biblical ministry within the church. The first half focuses on the *work* of ministry—the service. The second half focuses on the *workman* who performs ministry—the servant. The interlude between these two halves (1 Timothy 3:14–16) focuses on the *why* of ministry—the soul. Without soul the service the servant performs is sterile. The ministry may be theologically and biblically correct, but it’s all head and no heart. Fortunately, as we’ll see in this message, Paul’s was anything but a heartless or soulless ministry.



LET’S DIG DEEPER

1. Instruction: A Needed Change

Paul was as imperfect as they come. He was, he said, chief among sinners (1 Timothy 1:15 KJV). And to the Roman believers, Paul said he was a “wretched man” (Romans 7:24). We don’t often get such transparency from Paul, but his imperfections give us hope that God might use us in spite our own imperfections.



Quotable

*Our conduct
must be based
on scriptural
principles, not on
what we want or
think is best. We
can’t assume they
are the same.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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1 Timothy 3:14–16

2. Transition: A Helpful Summary (1 Timothy 3:14–16)

Paul is often seen in Scripture as an all-business-all-the-time sort of guy. And for much of his letter to Timothy, he was. But occasionally we see glimpses of the apostle's softer side, like we do in the transition between the two halves of 1 Timothy. Still committed to the church and theology, Paul was also committed to Timothy.

Personal Desire (1 Timothy 3:14)

Ecclesiastical Behavior (3:15)

Theological Confession (3:16)



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LET’S LIVE IT

God’s people aren’t perfect, of course. But we are redeemed and called to live in light of “the mystery of godliness” that we confess. To that end, as followers of Christ, our reaction to Paul’s interlude should be a practical response.

Our conduct must be based on scriptural principles, not on what we desire.

Our churches are to confirm and model the truth, not invent our own message.

Our confession must revolve around the Lord Jesus Christ, not around ourselves or anyone else.

Evaluate your life. How much of your life—your marriage, parenting, friendships, profession, thoughts, and habits—is based on biblical principles (that is, controlled by the Bible)?



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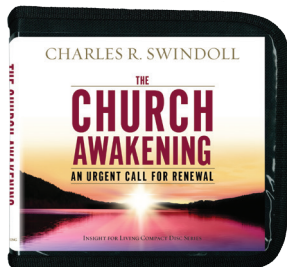
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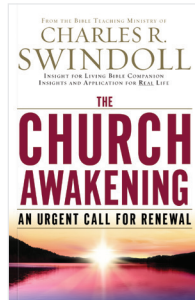
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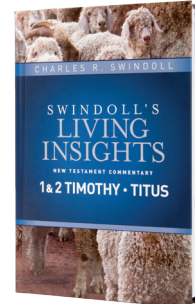
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