

One fantastic way to grow as disciples (and to make disciples) is to study the disciples in the Bible. When we read through Paul's letters, we find that several of them conclude with the names of individuals the apostle knew. He also served with many of them in the proclamation of the gospel. Yet, often we know little or nothing about these steadfast members of the Christian faith.

One exception, though, is a young believer named Timothy. The Bible tells us a great deal about him. Timothy is a helpful example for us today.

Here are just a few highpoints about his life that we glean from the New Testament:

- In Lystra, during Paul's second missionary journey, he learned that Timothy had an exceptional reputation among the local Christians (Acts 16:1-2);
- Timothy came from a mixed racial background, in which his mother was Jewish and his father was Greek;
- Timothy's familiarity with the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures made him an ideal protégé of Paul; and,
- In later years, Timothy served as Paul's emissary at various locales, where the apostle had established churches on his missionary journeys.

The life of Timothy gives us many examples that we can use both in our personal lives and our ministries. I have put together a list of things we can learn about Timothy from the Bible, as well as lessons that we can apply to our own lives.

By the way, you can feel free to use this list for any of the following:

- Preparing sermons on discipleship
- [Writing Sunday school lessons](#)
- Refreshing and customizing an existing [Sunday school curriculum](#)
- Personal or family devotions

Let's get a closer look at Timothy!

## Interesting facts about Timothy

1. **Timothy's name means "honoring God" or "precious to God."** These two designations proved to be true in the life of this disciple.
2. **From an early age, Timothy put his faith in the Lord** (Acts 16:1; 2 Tim. 1:5). Timothy saw this sincere trust in God first modeled by his grandmother, Lois. In turn, she imparted that faith to her daughter, Eunice, who then passed it on to her son, Timothy.
3. **Timothy may have heard about the Savior during Paul's first missionary journey** (Acts 14:6). If so, the Lord used Paul's proclamation of the gospel to bring Timothy to a saving knowledge of the truth. In this case, the young man's mother and grandmother also became disciples of Jesus due to the ministry of Paul.
4. **Despite Timothy's mixed racial background, he eagerly identified himself as a follower of the Messiah** (16:1). Indeed, in the time between Paul's first and second

missionary journeys, Timothy had won the admiration of the Christians in his hometown of Lystra and in the larger city of Iconium nearby to the north (vs. 2).

5. **Timothy grew up in an environment that was distinctively character forming.** It proved to be ideal for someone who was to be one of Paul's troubleshooters among the largely Gentile congregations of Greece and Asia Minor. By the time Paul made a return trip to Lystra, Timothy had developed sufficient leadership potential. For this reason, the apostle added Timothy to the team to help strengthen the house churches that already peppered Asia Minor.
6. **Paul was impressed by several character qualities in Timothy.** This included his knowledge of Judaism and the Hebrew Scriptures, his Gentile connections through his Greek father, and Timothy's reputation as a devout Christian.
7. **Paul was convinced that it was worth his time and effort to mentor Timothy.** Perhaps, as well, the apostle had seen the advantages of the Barnabas-Paul-Mark trio and had been looking for someone to complete another trio involving himself and Silas.
8. **Paul decided to have Timothy circumcised** (vs. 3). When Paul traveled to Derbe and Lystra, the controversy over circumcision was still alive. So, to avoid unnecessarily hindering Timothy's acceptance, Paul had him go through the religious rite. Such an act, the apostle hoped, would stop the mouths of those for whom circumcision was a major issue. What was at stake, after all, was not Timothy's salvation but a petty controversy.
9. **In contrast to Timothy, Paul thought a Greek disciple named Titus should not be circumcised** (Gal. 2:3). The reason for this differing outcome is that Timothy's mother was Jewish. According to Jewish law, children were to embrace the religion of their mother. So, the Jews would expect that Timothy was raised a Jew and circumcised. With respect to Titus, some Jews were attempting to make circumcision necessary for his salvation.
10. **Timothy had come a long way in the year or two since his conversion to Christ.** Nonetheless, Timothy had more to learn as he left Lystra and Iconium and headed west with Paul and Silas to evangelize the lost.
11. **Timothy was an active, faithful member of the missionary team.** As the trio ventured from one city to another, Timothy joined Paul and Silas in telling Jesus' followers what the apostles and other leaders in Jerusalem had decided at the recent conference (Acts 15:19-20; 16:4). The missionaries urged their fellow Christians to follow these instructions. As a result of the witness Paul, Silas, and Timothy gave, the churches grew stronger in their faith. Each day, more people trusted in Jesus for salvation (16:5).
12. **In the years that followed, Timothy became one of Paul's trusted partners** in addressing congregational problems, including those occurring in Corinth. When the apostle wrote 1 Corinthians, he had already begun his three-year mission to Ephesus (near the beginning of his third missionary journey). By now, Timothy had been associated with Paul for about seven years and was one of the apostle's leading troubleshooters.
13. **Paul dispatched Timothy to Corinth to help the members of the local church follow Paul's Christlike example** (4:15-16). Paul was confident that Timothy, who was a faithful disciple of Jesus, would follow the apostle's instructions. After all, Timothy had worked with Paul as a diligent, conscientious apprentice in spreading the gospel.

14. **While at Corinth, Timothy reminded his fellow believers there about Paul's godly lifestyle.** Timothy also reiterated to them the same spiritual truths the apostle taught to all the churches he established and visited on his various missionary journeys (vs. 17).
15. **During Paul's first Roman imprisonment, he planned to send Timothy to Philippi** (Phil. 2:19). At this time, he was with the apostle (1:1). Timothy would report on Paul's status in Rome (as he awaited his trial before Caesar) and bring back news about the church to the apostle. In this way, Paul would be encouraged by the information he received about them.
16. **Timothy's heart for ministry put him in an honored position among Paul's coworkers** (2:20-21). No other person shared the apostle's deep love for the Philippians and was so devoted to serve the church in an unselfish manner. Paul's glowing report about Timothy reminded the disciples of his unsullied character and faithfulness.
17. **Paul regarded Timothy as the apostle's "son" (vs. 22) in the faith.** The Greek noun could also be rendered "child" and denotes Paul's strong personal affection for Timothy (2 Tim. 1:2). Indeed, the apostle cared for Timothy as godly parents would love their own children.
18. **The beginning of 1 Timothy indicates that Paul traveled to Ephesus with Timothy.** This was likely after the apostle was released from prison (1:2). Perhaps within a relatively short period of time, the apostle left Timothy at the Ephesian church because a serious threat to sound doctrine had arisen there. When Paul directed his attention to the churches in Macedonia, he knew he could trust Timothy to deal with the situation in Ephesus (vs. 3).
19. **Paul granted Timothy written authorization to carry out his pastoral work in Ephesus.** Even though the apostle's letter to his younger coworker was personal, Paul intended the epistle's content to be read to the entire congregation. In this regard, Paul asserted his apostolic authority both for the sake of Timothy and to empower him in confronting the false teachers who had infiltrated the church (vss. 4-7).
20. **Paul gave Timothy a sacred trust to keep the gospel pure from contamination.** This pastoral mandate corresponded with earlier "prophecies" (vs. 18) made about Timothy. These probably occurred in an assembly of Christians where the Spirit spoke through believers to designate Timothy for his special ministry. This may have been the time referred to in 4:14 when Timothy was ordained to the ministry.
21. **Timothy dealt with a series of conflicts involving the opponents of the gospel** (1:18). Against this sobering backdrop, he attended to his inner spiritual condition by holding firmly to his Christian faith and keeping his conscience clear. Because the religious frauds had neglected these areas, they had fallen into serious error. In contrast, Timothy paid close attention to these matters, particularly as he contended for the faith and sought to teach others the truth (vs. 19).
22. **Timothy's spiritual life and ministry were his continual concern.** This is why Paul wanted his protégé to give undivided attention to the pastoral issues at hand (4:15). The apostle's directive suggests that Timothy undertook his ministerial responsibilities carefully and absorbed himself in them. As a result of giving himself wholeheartedly to the Savior and His work, others recognized Timothy's progress in the faith.
23. **Timothy was careful about how he lived and what he taught.** This included being persistent in attending to his pastoral duties (vs. 16). The apostle had given Timothy sound instruction, and now it was up to him to remain loyal to the truth in both his life

and ministry. As someone called upon to uphold the gospel in the midst of false teaching, it was crucial for Timothy to guard his thoughts and feelings. A failure would hurt both him and the cause of Christ in the churches around Ephesus.

24. **In seeking to set a good example, Timothy abstained from wine (5:23).** Paul, however, let Timothy know that keeping pure did not include jeopardizing his health, and so encouraged him to drink a little wine for his stomach. Luke, a physician and Paul's traveling companion, may have advised the apostle in this matter. Pure drinking water was not readily available in those days. Wine would have been safer to drink, especially for someone who was sick.
25. **As a "man of God" (6:11), Timothy was owned by and yielded to the Lord.** For this reason, Paul urged Timothy to shun all enticements to seize worldly riches and power. Instead, he was to diligently fight the battle for the Christian faith against the false teachers at Ephesus (vs. 12). Timothy was also to affirm through his actions the vow of allegiance to the Savior he had made in the presence of many witnesses either at his baptism or at his ordination.
26. **Timothy dealt forthrightly with the spiritual charlatans at Ephesus (vs. 20).** This included guarding the sound doctrine of the gospel that Paul entrusted to him. At the same time, Timothy shunned godless and useless chatter, along with contradictory statements being flaunted as spiritual knowledge.
27. **Paul prayed for Timothy night and day (2 Tim. 1:3).** After all, he was carrying a heavy burden and needed whatever support he could get. Timothy's tears at their last parting increased Paul's desire to see him again (vs. 4).
28. **Paul hoped to improve Timothy's ministry effectiveness.** The apostle admonished the younger pastor to make full use of the spiritual gift God had given him. At Timothy's ordination, in which Paul had played a part, Timothy received a special endowment for ministry (vs. 6).
29. **Paul wanted Timothy to be fearless in Christian service, as well as confident of God's power and love (vs. 7).** The apostle also wanted his spiritual son to follow God's call through to the end. Paul knew that Timothy's commitment to serve had been severely tested by false teachers. They especially challenged his role as a leader in the church. The apostle also knew that Timothy would face ongoing adversity as he sought to fulfill his pastoral responsibilities.
30. **Paul exhorted Timothy not to be ashamed to speak for the Savior.** Likewise, Timothy was not to be ashamed of Paul, who was imprisoned a second time for his proclamation of the gospel (vs. 8). In the face of antagonism, Timothy was to join with Paul in suffering for the sake of the good news.
31. **Timothy trusted God to give him the strength to do what was right.** This was the same Lord who had redeemed him from sin and judgment. God had also summoned Timothy to become part of His holy people, and to live a morally pure manner (vs. 9).
32. **Timothy had a wonderful spiritual heritage and many opportunities to boldly declare the message of truth.** So, Paul directed Timothy to remain faithful to the gospel and its proclamation. He could do so by holding fast to the standard, or pattern, of sound teaching he had received from the apostle (vs. 13).
33. **Timothy was to proclaim the good news in faith and love.** Timothy was also to obey the gospel and safeguard it against attack. He was to do so through the power of the Spirit (vs. 14).

34. **Timothy had a hesitant, reserved personality.** Paul, realizing this, directed Timothy to be spiritually strong in the grace of the Father that was available to all who believed in the Son (2:1).
35. **Timothy was to entrust the truths of the faith to dependable believers** (vs. 2). This pointed to the central role of discipleship in Timothy's ongoing pastoral ministry. Paul's exhortation to his spiritual child was prompted by the fact that false teachers were trying to distort the apostolic doctrines of the faith.
36. **God was Timothy's witness as he solemnly warned troublemakers not to argue about useless philosophical matters.** Indeed, those who listened to the frauds were spiritually harmed by what was said (vs. 14). Timothy effectively carried out his pastoral responsibilities by diligently studying and accurately expounding God's Word. In turn, this enabled Jesus' disciples to know sound doctrine (vs. 15).
37. **Over the years of their collaboration together, Paul had taught Timothy many truths.** In the face of stiff opposition, the apostle urged Timothy to remain faithful to those truths. Since these teachings had come from such a trustworthy minister as Paul, Timothy had the utmost confidence in their reliability (3:14).
38. **During Timothy's childhood, his mother and grandmother taught him God's Word** (vs. 15). So, Timothy instinctively knew that the message Paul proclaimed was consistent with the Holy Scriptures. In fact, the latter had given Timothy the wisdom that eventually led him to salvation through faith in the Redeemer.
39. **Timothy's primary responsibility was to herald the gospel** (4:1-2). He was to be ready and willing at all times to use God's Word to correct and censure the transgressor and to exhort and encourage the wayward. Moreover, in his pastoral role, Timothy was to exercise great patience, especially as he carefully taught others the truths of righteousness.
40. **Paul instructed Timothy to remain calm and patiently endure affliction** (vs. 5). He was also to focus on his calling, namely, to herald the gospel and lead the unsaved to faith in the Son. As long as Timothy did the work of an evangelist, he would fulfill his God-given duties.
41. **Timothy's enduring legacy was that of faithful Christian service.** On the one hand, his background in Judaism and Hellenistic paganism made him a useful emissary of Paul in places such as Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:2). On the other hand, Timothy spent time with Paul on his numerous preaching excursions (Rom. 16:21; 2 Cor. 1:19). Timothy even accompanied Paul and several other associates to Jerusalem with a love offering to ease their impoverished situation (Acts 20:4).
42. **Throughout the remainder of Timothy's life, he never wavered as a disciple of Jesus.** Even when Timothy was imprisoned for a time (possibly at Rome), he remained true to his pastoral calling (Heb. 13:23). According to the *Acts of Timothy* (possibly written in the fifth century), Timothy was martyred for his faith in d. 97, when a mob of irate unbelievers stoned the aged church leader to death for opposing their veneration of the pagan goddess, Diana (or Artemis).

## Practical lessons from the life of Timothy

1. **The arc of Timothy's existence brought honor to God.** Likewise, glorifying the Lord should be the prime concern of our earthly sojourn.

2. **Timothy's entire life centered on a ministry of discipleship.** It involved his grandmother, mother, and Paul (among others). This truth reminds us how much we benefit from the mentorship of others in our life. We also recognize that God wants us to disciple believers in the Christian faith.
3. **Timothy met Paul during his missionary excursions.** We rarely know what might become of the seemingly "chance" meetings we have with people. God opens doors for us through the people we meet and the circumstances we encounter.
4. **Paul's proclamation of the gospel was a major turning point in Timothy's life.** Consider how the heralding of the good news has impacted you. Also, take into account how Jesus can use your sharing the message of salvation with the lost to bring them to salvation.
5. **It was Timothy's honorable reputation that endeared him to Paul's heart.** When we find younger believers of noteworthy character, we will want to include them in our lives. In their early years, adolescent Christians should realize the unique opportunity they possess to distinguish themselves with excellent character.
6. **It took time, in distinctive ministry environments, for Timothy to mature and become an effective Christian leader.** Similarly, our path to maturity and increasing ministry effectiveness does not take place all at once. Instead, the process of spiritual growth occurs in differing circumstances involving numerous people over many years.
7. **Timothy was a unique disciple with distinctive character qualities.** The same can be said about us. While we are united in our Christian faith, this does not mean we are to become clones of one another. Rather, the Spirit can use our personal knowledge, deepening faith, and innate aptitudes to make a difference in the world for the Savior.
8. **Timothy partnered with others, such as Paul and Silas, in the ministry of the gospel.** This contrasts sharply with society's go-it-alone attitude, a mindset that all too often plagues congregations today. The Spirit calls us to work with other believers in bringing the lost to faith and discipling new believers in their walk with Christ.
9. **When appropriate, Timothy was willing to accommodate the needs and preferences of others.** From this we see that being obstinate is not the same as tenacity. Likewise, rigidity should not be mistaken for single-mindedness. The Spirit can enable us to discern these important distinctions, with the result that we avoid creating unnecessary barriers to the proclamation and acceptance of the gospel.
10. **The Spirit enabled Timothy to overcome his apprehensive disposition.** In similar fashion, when we rely on the Spirit, we have the ability to be courageous in dealing with challenging and longstanding problems in diverse congregational settings.
11. **Timothy affirmed that other believers, such as Paul, were noteworthy examples of Christlikeness.** In our discipleship ministries, we can encourage younger believers by pointing them to the sterling character modeled by other Christians. These could be believers within our own church, as well as within the worldwide body of Christ.
12. **Timothy served the Church in an unselfish manner.** In our contemporary, narcissistic culture, there is the temptation to make ourselves the center of our ministry endeavors. We must conscientiously resist this trap, remembering that the proclamation of the gospel and the edification of the saints are intended to bring glory to God.
13. **Timothy's relationship with Paul was characterized by mutual respect and trust, along with commitment and compassion.** These are the same virtues that should typify how we relate to our fellow believers. It means the roots of our spiritual lives and

ministries are planted deeply in this mutually affirming and edifying soil. As a result, our congregations will be better prepared to deal forthrightly with serious threats that spring up.

14. **Paul encouraged Timothy to remain faithful to his pastoral call and duties.** The Spirit has also summoned us to a life of devoted Christian service, whether in an ordained or a lay capacity. This includes tending to our inner spiritual needs, as well as being attentive to the concerns of Jesus' followers around us. It is a lifelong endeavor that requires our active involvement.
15. **Timothy was effective in ministry because he remained committed to the gospel.** From this we recognize that the truths of the faith are consequential. Indeed, matters of eternal importance are at stake. If we fail to uphold the historic teachings of Christianity, we undermine the redemptive work of the Savior.
16. **Timothy was careful to set a good example.** We, too, are to be persons dedicated to the Redeemer. As such, we are to guard our thoughts and feelings. To do otherwise risks hurting both ourselves and those we are called to disciple.
17. **Ultimately, Timothy was accountable to God for his actions.** In the same way, the Lord holds us responsible for what we think, say, and do. This truth can serve as an incentive for us to be faithful stewards of the time, talents, and treasures the Spirit has entrusted to our care.
18. **God's power and love in Timothy's life enabled him to be fearless in Christian service.** The Lord also promises to be with us as we are courageous in sharing the good news with others. The Spirit can give us the insight and energy we need to be winsome ambassadors for the Savior to the lost. The Spirit can also help us remain persons of integrity as we minister the gospel to those wallowing in depravity.
19. **Timothy did not regret investing his life in discipling others.** His example encourages us never to be embarrassed by our association with the cause of Christ. Even when it seems unpopular or disadvantageous, Jesus invites us, as His disciples, to join with other believers in experiencing adversity, if necessary, for the sake of the gospel.
20. **Timothy entrusted the Lord with his temporal and eternal future.** We can do the same, for we know that God is in control. The all-powerful Creator will one day vindicate our decision to remain faithful to the gospel and its proclamation.
21. **Timothy refused to become sidetracked by dead-end philosophical issues.** We also must not allow ourselves to be distracted by pointless matters that consume the attention of false teachers. Our God-given mandate is to herald the gospel, encourage the wayward, and confront those in the Church who luxuriate in sin. The Spirit can empower us to remain calm and patient as we shoulder our important, but often difficult, ministry responsibilities.
22. **Toward the end of Paul's life, he recalled the simple purity of Timothy's faith.** In all of our experiences, including the successes and failures, we should remember that what happened to us at the beginning (namely, salvation) is what endures to the end. In all our maturity, we can never go deeper than genuine faith in the Savior.

## Want to learn more about Timothy?

Be sure to check out the following print and web-based resources:

- [Apostle Timothy of the Seventy 2015. Orthodox Church in America.](#)
- Bruce FF 2006. *The Pauline Circle*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock.
- [Butler A 1866. St. Timothy, Bishop and Martyr. \*The Lives of the Saints\*.](#)
- [Easton MG 1897. Timothy. In \*Easton's Bible Dictionary\*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.](#)
- [Graves D 2015. St. Timothy, Paul's Associate.](#)
- Hawthorne GF 1988. Timothy. In GW Bromiley (ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4:857–8. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Gillman J 1992. Timothy. In DE Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:558–60. New York: Doubleday.
- Kee HC 1962. Timothy. In GA Buttrick (ed.), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4:650–1. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- [Saint Timothy 2015. \*Encyclopaedia Britannica\*.](#)
- [Timothy 2015. \*Wikipedia\*.](#)
- Van Elderen B 2009. Timothy. In M Silva (ed.), *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 5:863–5. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.