



# SECOND BAPTIST *CEDARTOWN*

Sunday School Member's Guide  
Winter 2023-2024

In December 2023 we will study the birth of Jesus as prophesied in the Old Testament. Starting in 2024, we will study the importance of sound doctrine as described in 1 Timothy.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2023-2024 GOD'S FAITHFUL LOVE HOSEA 11:1-11 12/3/2023

## MAIN POINT

God does not base His affection for His children according to their faithfulness, but according to His own.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Which TV father reminds you of your father and why?**

**What are the key characteristics a good father should possess? Of these characteristics, which are universally challenging?**

The prophet Hosea began his message by picturing God as a rejected husband who nonetheless lovingly forgave and received His wayward wife back (Hos. 1–3). As he wrote, Hosea shifted his imagery of God from a Husband to a Father—a tender Father wanting His children close, not basing His affection for them according to their faithfulness, but His own.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ HOSEA 11:1-2.

Hosea depicted Israel as God's son and then told of God's nurturing activity toward him. Because of God's desire to love Israel as a caring Father toward His son, He called him out of Egypt, a reference to the exodus event. Here, the entire episode involving Moses, pharaoh, the 10 plagues, and the exodus out of Egypt is subsumed under the call of a loving Father to His son.

**Read Matthew 2:15. How is this verse fulfilled in Jesus? Why is Jesus the ultimate example of God's compassion?**

From this section of Hosea, we learn that a father pursues, even when his child rebels. God doesn't give up on us or throw us to the dogs; He pursues us with a passion that can't be

matched. Despite God's relentless, loving pursuit of Israel, Hosea goes on to note that Israel did not return His love (see 11:2). The Israelites rejected the Father and pursued other false gods. As a loving Father, God had called Israel out of Egypt. How would this loving Father respond to their rejection? How would He address their continued devotion to Baal? God pursued them. He chastised them for their sin, but He also sought to restore them. The analogy of the Husband buying back his enslaved wife (Hos. 1-3) is reinforced with this imagery of a jilted Father pursuing His wayward son (Hos. 11).

**Why is it so easy for us to drift away from God (think: schedules, work, parenting responsibilities, etc.)?**

**How do you typically respond to rejection? What do these verses from the Book of Hosea teach us about how God responds to rejection?**

READ HOSEA 11:3-4.

God's teaching His Israel to walk referred to His loving nurture and guidance. He taught them to depend on Him and to honor Him with their lives. God called His son out of Egypt (Hos. 11:1); a former group of slaves were becoming God's people. They had to learn the very basics of worship, ritual, ethics, and covenant responsibility. God guided them.

**Have different volunteers read the following passages: Ex. 15:26; Ps. 78:23-25; Deut. 1:29-31; 8:1-6; Isa. 1:2; 40:29-31; 41:10; 46:3-4. Discuss how God took care of His children yet they continued to reject His love and care.**

**Share a story of how your children or grandchildren have rejected your love and discipline at one time or another. Ask for volunteers to give examples of their own experiences as parents or grandparents.**

**Why does God's love for us always require discipline? Is it possible for Him to love us without it? Why or why not?**

As a loving Father, the Lord continues to nurture us. We benefit by reflecting on how He nurtured us in the past, providing for our needs and surrounding us with loving people to share our lives. We also benefit by seeking the Lord, asking Him to reveal how He wants to nurture us today. Finally, we benefit when we remember God disciplines us as a father disciplines his son. God's fatherly discipline is always motivated by love (Prov. 3:12).

READ HOSEA 11:5-11.

**What does God say would happen to Israel since they refused to obey (vv. 5- 6)?**

**According to verse 7, why did God not listen to Israel when they called?**

**According to verses 8-9, what is it about God's character that keeps Israel from being obliterated?**

The Lord's anguish billowed up because Israel was doomed to suffer a similar outcome to Sodom and Gomorrah's since they sinned and refused to repent. Yet, because of His special relationship with Israel, God anguished over Israel's future. This anguish, in the form of four rhetorical questions in verse 8, pounds the reader like a drum. These questions help us understand the intensity of God's love for Israel. As a result, the Lord declared, "I have had a change of heart; My compassion is stirred!"

**What did God "change His heart" about?**

The final segment, verses 10-11, shifts the focus once again from God's anguish and compassion to Israel's restoration. God's compassion allowed Israel to follow the Lord. Hosea used a simile comparing the Lord to a roaring lion. His compassion will fill the land like the roar of a lion, and Israel will come trembling in reverence to Him.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Do you really understand the love of God? What makes this challenging?**

**How does your life need to change to reflect and honor the type of love God has shown you? What is one change you can make this week?**

**Do you know anyone who would benefit from hearing about God's love and affection? Begin praying today for someone in whom you can invest and with whom you can share about the love of our Heavenly Father. Then do it.**

## PRAYER

Close with prayer, thanking God for His faithfulness and love even though we repeatedly turn from His ways. Pray that your knowledge of God as a perfect, loving father would change the way your group members relate to God.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2023-2024 THE COMING KING MICAH 5:1-15 12/10/2023

## MAIN POINT

The culmination of God's promised peace came through a baby born in Bethlehem.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**When have you waited a long time for something (a first date, college graduation, marriage, first home, children, a family member's salvation, etc.)? What was the hardest part about the waiting?**

**Did the end result make the waiting worth it? Explain.**

Waiting is one of the hardest parts of the human experience. What we want, we want now. But there's also a beauty in the waiting—a sacredness in longing for a spouse, a newborn baby, or that dream job. There's hope in the expectation that your family will come to know the Lord, or in your desire to enter the gates of heaven and see Jesus face-to-face. To wait is to participate in an undeniable, painful, yet beautiful natural process in this life. God's people experienced such a period of waiting. In the midst of prophetic words, promises from the Lord, and signs among the heavens, a yearning group of hopeless people longed for the hope and redemption of their haggard nation. They longed for the star of Bethlehem, a sign of the King for whom they so desperately ached.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ MICAH 5:1-6.

The context of these verses began in Micah 4:9, where the prophet Micah predicted the fall of Jerusalem, the Babylonian captivity, and the eventual return of the people to the land. Micah also may have had in view the unsuccessful siege of Jerusalem by Assyria during Hezekiah's reign.

**Take a closer look at verse 1. What are some ways Christians suffer as a result of living in a culture that ignores or rejects God?**

**What hope do we have in Jesus in the midst of suffering?**

**What signs of desperation do you see in our world today that should make people long for the security God offers? Why do people ignore that security for a dangerous and uncertain future?**

Christians living in a culture that rejects God can suffer when God's judgment falls on their disobedient nation. But those of us in Christ are beholders of hope. We have the freedom to be faithful in the midst of suffering, responding in a way that testifies of our confidence in God's providential plan.

**What do you know about Bethlehem? What type of place was it? How did Micah prophesy God would use Bethlehem in the future?**

Bethlehem was situated about five miles south-southwest of Jerusalem. Compared to Jerusalem with its magnificent buildings, Bethlehem was characterized as "small" in size and significance. Yet in spite of its relative insignificance, this birthplace of David (1 Sam 16:1, 18; 17:12) would also become the birthplace of his greatest descendant, the Messiah (Matt 2:1-8). Though Bethlehem was a blip on most of Israel's radar, it became the epicenter of God's plan to redeem the world.

**How is Jesus described in these verses?**

**How would Jesus compare to the previous rulers of Israel?**

**What do these verses teach us about the divinity and eternity of Jesus?**

**Compare the seeming insignificance of Bethlehem with the incomparable worth of Jesus. How does God often work in surprising ways?**

From Bethlehem would come "one who will be ruler over Israel" (i.e., over the entire nation, north and south). At last, Israel will have a completely fit ruler! This ruler will rule for God and carry out His plan for the earth. From a human perspective, this is an unexpected plan; yet from God's perspective, this has been His plan from eternity past. In God's economy, often what seems foolish to men reveals the hidden wisdom of God.

READ MICAH 5:7-15.

**What facts about the Lord do we understand from these verses? How were these promises fulfilled in Jesus' life on earth? What parts of this prophecy remain to be fulfilled at Jesus' return and rule over the earth?**

**God abandoned Israel when they rebelled against Him, yet provided a great promise to give them hope for the future. How did Israel experience freedom from captivity? In what ways will we enjoy the rest of this promise?**

The ultimate fulfillment of the promise of peace will be realized in the kingdom of God. We will finally live in the safe environment that all desire but that can never be achieved by

human governments or armies. In the kingdom of God we will be in our Savior's presence, we will be under His rule, and we will never experience danger or fear again. The return of Jesus is the great hope that sustains and encourages us as we face the uncertainties of daily life.

**What promise of hope is there in the eternal, personal relationship we will have with God the Father? How did Jesus make this possible?**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**In a world filled with darkness, how should promises of peace and security in God's kingdom affect the way you live today? How will you live with hope, yet still work effectively for the Lord today?**

**Who in your life needs to know about the great hope you have in Christ? What plans can you make to share this truth with him or her this week?**

## PRAYER

Thank God for exhibiting His power, grace, and glory in surprising and unexpected ways. Praise God for saving you. Pray that God would open your eyes to see clearly how He is working in the world around you.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2023-2024 GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES ISAIAH 7:10-16; MATTHEW 1:18-25  
12/17/2023

## MAIN POINT

We live with true hope because God always keeps His promises—past, present, and future.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is the worst Christmas season you've ever had? What made it so bad? During that difficult season, in what or whom were you placing your hope?**

**How have you trusted God even when life circumstances made trusting Him difficult?**

The way we react in tough seasons of life reveals the source of our hope. For some people hope is found in a spouse, a job, or even children. However, Advent is a reminder for us that our hope should be found in one place alone—Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrate at Christmas and whose return we anxiously hope for. This text reminds us that the hope of God's people has come home in Jesus.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

The Southern Kingdom of Judah faced the threat of attack by an alliance of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Aram (Syria). Isaiah urged Judah to trust in God for its deliverance, promising defeat for its enemies and for all nations opposing the Lord. Isaiah 7:1-16 tells of Isaiah's bringing good news to Ahaz, king of Judah, concerning the threats of Israel and Aram.

READ ISAIAH 7:10-16.

The Lord promised Ahaz deliverance if he would turn to Him in faith. The Lord even offered to prove this was not a trick and to show He was sincere in making this offer. God permitted Ahaz to ask for any sign he wanted. Ahaz knew God had redeemed His people from Egypt, brought them into Canaan, and established His covenant with them and their descendants. God's past faithfulness and goodness should have encouraged Ahaz to trust Him in the present.



**What do you think of God’s invitation for Ahaz to test Him?**

**Ahaz was an ungodly man who participated in pagan worship and dishonored God’s temple. What did his statement in verse 12 imply?**

**Read 2 Kings 16:7-9. What was Ahaz’s alternative plan?**

**Ahaz masked his lack of trust in God with false humility. What examples have you seen of people covering up their sin with a veneer of virtue?**

**When was the last time you did this?**

**Reflecting on the ways God has been faithful to you in the past is one of the best ways to maintain hope and confidence in Him through your present circumstances. What is one obstacle that keeps you from reflecting on God’s past faithfulness?**

Sometimes we can use pious language in an impious manner. We can quote passages out of context and misuse God’s Word to support our lack of faith and selfish desires. Disobedience characterized Ahaz’s life (see 2 Kings 16:1-4). His refusal of a divine sign indicated his decision not to trust God.

**Look again at verse 14. What is the sign that the Lord will give to Ahaz anyway? How does this sign fit the crisis?**

**Immanuel means “God with us.” What was this name supposed to communicate to Ahaz? What does it mean to you?**

Despite Ahaz’s refusal to request a sign, God provided a sign to confirm His word. The virgin would bear a son, and name him Immanuel. The name Immanuel means “God with us” and occurs only in Isaiah (Isa. 7:14; 8:8) in the Old Testament. While the name can be understood negatively as God coming to be with us to bring judgment (Isa. 8:8), the phrase God with us primarily connotes God’s saving presence (Ps. 46:7). Isaiah later used the translation of the name to express God’s protection of His people against threat (Isa. 8:10) indicating Isaiah saw the name as a positive sign of God’s presence. Centuries later, Matthew described to a faithless world how this sign pointed to the birth of the Messiah, an event with both immediate and future fulfillment. The following passage from Matthew describes the incarnation—when the Son of God, second Person of the Trinity, came to earth as Jesus, our Savior.

**READ MATTHEW 1:18-25.**

**What catches your attention most in this very familiar account from the Christmas story?**

**What do you learn about Joseph from these verses?**

Verse 21 contains the most important part of the angel's revelation—Jesus' name revealed His purpose. Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means "Yahweh saves." God Himself was coming to earth with the goal of saving people, rescuing sinners from the punishment they deserve. Jesus was the exact baby to which Isaiah had referred 700 hundred years before. And to reinforce that fact, Matthew quoted from Isaiah 7:14 in verse 23.

**Why was it important for Him to become like us and be born as a baby? How have you seen Jesus as "Immanuel" in your life lately?**

The fact that God Himself came to Earth in full humanity means we don't worship or pray to a God who has no understanding of our struggles. For 33 years, Jesus lived with the temptations, restrictions, and limitations we all face in a world marred by sin and constrained to time. Not only is He merciful and all-knowing, but we have the assurance He is empathetic as well.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What are some practical things that you can do during the Christmas season to focus on Christ as the hope of your life?**

**Is there something God has asked you to do that you haven't followed through on? How could you take steps toward obedience this week?**

**How would you describe the daily impact of "God With Us" in your life?**

**Is there someone on your heart right now who needs to know the hope Christ gives? How can you create the opportunity to share it with them this week?**

## PRAYER

Close today's meeting with a time of prayer for the faith journeys of the people in your group. Through prayer, encourage the group with promises from Scripture about God's goodness and love for them.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2023-2024 GOSPEL GOALS FOR THE NEW YEAR JAMES 4:13-17; JAMES 5:7-8;  
PHILIPPIANS 3:7-14 12/31/2023

## MAIN POINT

As we wait for Jesus to return, there is no greater pursuit than to know Him and make Him known.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Outside of being a holiday, do you typically approach January 1 with some measure of weight and importance, or do you treat it like just another day? Why?**

**Considering that new year resolutions are notorious for being broken, why do you think so many people continue to make them each year?**

**When you come to the end of this year, what is one thing you hope will have been true of you? Why?**

Whether they carry out new goals or not, most people give at least some measure of thought each new year to doing things differently. Goals to improve one's health, relationships, and finances are good commitments to make! But should the new year be different for those who trust in Christ? What does it look like to turn the page on a new year in a way that emphasizes gospel priorities?

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ JAMES 4:13-17.

**What realities did James highlight in these verses?**

**How does James' warning here apply to the topic of New Year's Day or making resolutions?**

**Did James mean it's a sin to make resolutions? How does verse 17 help you put James' words in right perspective?**

James urged us to add a key qualifier to our planning: "If the Lord wills." James did not simply want us to alter our words, as if saying, "If the Lord wills" at the end of every sentence could somehow make us righteous before God. Rather, James wanted a new perspective to sink deep into our hearts and inform every word we speak. James called believers not simply to contemplate their lack of knowledge of the future, but to assess the very nature of existence. When we understand who we are in Christ, the brevity of life on earth, and the reality of God's eternal kingdom, we will approach every day with a gospel-centered, God-honoring perspective.

**What's the difference between inviting God into your plans and letting Him lead your life? Why does this matter?**

READ JAMES 5:7-8.

**Do you tend to view waiting patiently as something that is active or inactive? Based on his chosen illustration of a farmer, did James view waiting patiently for the Lord as active or inactive?**

**What does the analogy of the farmer indicate about what the Lord wills for you in the new year?**

**How does the reality of verse 8 impact your plans and perspective?**

James was writing to Christians who were likely externally oppressed and internally conflicted. His words of comfort addressed both situations. Whether or not it's persecution or extreme suffering, we will all struggle in the year ahead. James exhorted us to be patient and endure until the Lord comes. Though a farmer waits for the rain to produce his crops, he works while he waits, preparing the soil to the best of his ability. Like the farmer, believers must make the most of the time we are given, enduring and working diligently toward God's kingdom purposes. As we live obediently, God does what only He can do to produce the best possible results in our lives.

READ PHILIPPIANS 3:7-14.

**Prior to his conversion experience, how did Paul define success in life? How did he define it after knowing Christ?**

**What are some pursuits for the new year the world might view as gains that Paul would consider loss compared to knowing Christ?**

**Based on these verses, what would Paul say is a worthy new year's resolution for believers? Why?**

Demonstrating the lack of importance of earthly things, Paul expressed what life truly meant to him. He desired resurrection from the dead, so he pursued the only way that

promised resurrection. The Damascus road experience transformed him. He discovered that Judaism with its traditions, regulations, and rituals could not guarantee resurrection. Only the resurrected One could. This changed Paul's aim in life. He wanted to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. To know Christ meant much more than knowing about Him in his mind. Paul wanted the closest possible personal relationship with Christ. No matter how long you've known Christ, there is no greater goal or resolution than to know Him more.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Based on these Scripture passages, what should you desire to be true of you in the year ahead?**

**Can you truly know Christ and the power of His resurrection without sharing the gospel with those who don't? Explain. Why should making Christ known be part of the plans and purposes of every believer?**

**What practical steps will you take to trust God with your plans in the coming year?**

## PRAYER

Thank Jesus that He is returning and for the promise of eternal life. Ask Him to remind you daily how that truth ought to impact your plans and purposes. Invite Him to draw you closer than ever before as you seek to know Him and make Him known to those around you in the days ahead.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2023-2024 FALSE DOCTRINE 1 TIMOTHY 1:1-11 1/7/2024

## MAIN POINT

When we fight false teaching, we support the immeasurable value of God's grace to us in Christ.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**If you grew up going to church, what was your experience like? If you didn't, what was your perception of church growing up?**

**What were some of the messages of the church you grew up in? Is the message of our church in any way different from your experience growing up?**

**What is the ultimate message of the church? Why do you think churches are sometimes inconsistent in their message?**

The central message of the church must be the gospel of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the church is full of sinners, it will inevitably falter in consistently delivering that message. One of the ways in which the church falters is by arguing over secondary matters. Paul began his first letter to Timothy, a young pastor he had discipled, by warning him against false teachers who were distorting the gospel through petty arguments over myths and genealogies. By looking at Paul's warning to Timothy, we come to know why the gospel is good news and how God intends that good news to be the central message that guides us.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 1 TIMOTHY 1:1-2.

**How did Paul introduce himself in this letter in verse 1? Why do you think Paul introduced himself in the letter this way?**

Paul introduced himself in 1 Timothy as he did in many of his letters as “an apostle of Jesus Christ.” His introduction establishes that he was “commanded” by God to deliver this message to Timothy and to us. Paul saw his apostleship and the authority with which He wrote as products of God’s grace. Given that Paul would command Timothy to charge certain persons to stop teaching “different doctrine,” it was important for Paul to establish his apostolic authority up front. Paul referred to God as “our savior” and Christ as “our hope” to remind Timothy and his church that their only hope of living for the glory of God was to trust in the gospel of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**How did Paul describe Timothy in verse 2? What does that tell us about their relationship?**

READ 1 TIMOTHY 1:3-11.

**Why did Paul encourage Timothy to “remain at Ephesus” (v. 3)?**

**What was the result of the teaching of those who were teaching “different doctrine” in Ephesus (vv. 4, 6)? Why was Paul concerned about these false teachers?**

**What does Paul indicate that sound biblical teaching should produce in the hearts of its hearers (vv. 4-5)?**

**What are some examples of false teaching that the church must guard against today?**

While the exact nature of the false teachers in Ephesus remains unclear, Paul states the dangerous effect of their teaching: it produced “speculations rather than the stewardship that is from faith” (v. 4) and caused people to wander “into vain discussion” (v. 6). In other words this false teaching encouraged debates and speculations about secondary things rather than encouraging faith-driven devotion and gospel-centered living.

**What did Paul hope his and Timothy’s teaching would produce in those who heard them (v. 5)? How was their goal different from the false teachers’ goal?**

The goal of Paul and Timothy’s teaching was to produce love that issues from “a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (v. 5). For our lives to be marked by such love requires that we come to know God personally by grace through faith in His Son (Paul will illustrate this further in verses 8-11 by describing the role of the law). No one is good (Rom. 3:10) and all have fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). The only way to have a “pure heart” and a good conscience is by trusting in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. Salvation by grace through faith lies at the very heart of the gospel.

READ 1 TIMOTHY 1:8-11.

**Do you think so many people find works-based theology so appealing? Why or why not?**

**How is the law “not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient” (v. 9)? What does that tell us about the role of the law in our lives?**

**How does the law point us to our need for Christ?**

**Why do you think Paul concluded his warning against false teachers by comparing the law with the gospel?**

It is likely that the false teachers Paul warned Timothy of were promoting salvation by works in their various debates. Works-based theology has always been enticing because appeals to our pride by elevating the contributions of people over and above the grace of God. In verses 9-10, Paul laid out a litany of sins that the law exposes, illustrating the law’s limited usefulness. The law exposes our sinful nature but does not offer us forgiveness. Thus, the law demonstrates our desperate need for a savior, whereas the gospel is the only answer to the sin that separates us from God.

## **APPLICATION**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**In what areas of your life has God recently revealed your lack of righteousness and need for Christ?**

**What are the secondary issues that are most likely to overshadow the gospel of Jesus Christ at our church if we do not guard against them? How can we guard against them?**

**How might knowing that we are saved by grace through faith and not by works change the way we think of ourselves? How might knowing that change the way we think about spiritual growth?**

## **PRAYER**

Thank God for exposing our sin through the law and offering us the solution to our sin through the death and resurrection of Christ.



# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2023-2024 BIBLICAL MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD 1 TIMOTHY 2:8-15  
1/14/2024

## MAIN POINT

God created men and women in His image. Reflecting that creation means living in a certain way with certain roles.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is your favorite hobby? Why do you enjoy it so much?**

**What are some ways we tend to let our hobbies, our jobs, or other activities that fill our days define us?**

Hobbies and activities are often tied to identity. If you enjoy running, perhaps you label yourself a runner. Or perhaps you call yourself a “gym rat” because you love working out. We can quickly and easily identify ourselves as dads, accountants, cyclists, moms, supervisors, or family taxi drivers. A study of creation helps us know the true source of our identity as men and women created uniquely by God in His image. This helps us understand how Christian men and women relate to God and one another, having been reconciled with God and given the Holy Spirit to live godly lives.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ GENESIS 2:18-25.

**Why do you think God referred to Eve as a “helper” in verse 18?**

**How would you characterize the relationship between Adam and Eve? Between God and man? What makes this kind of fellowship possible?**

**How do we see the image of God in both the man and the woman? How is the image of God displayed in how the man and woman related to one another?**

The creation of the man left creation incomplete. The man was alone, which was not good. He needed someone to whom he could relate and with whom he could fulfill God’s will, so

God created the woman as a helper for the man. Helper refers to someone who supplies what another lacks. While the woman would be like him, she would also be different. The woman's strengths complemented his own and allowed them to accomplish God's commands together.

**What happened to the man and woman in the very next chapter? What impact did this have on their relationship with God and with one another?**

READ 1 TIMOTHY 2:8-15.

Paul spent the first chapter of 1 Timothy underscoring the importance of the gospel and reminding his young friend that the motivation behind his evangelism was to bring believers to love God with a pure heart, good conscience, and a sincere faith. Beginning in chapter 2, Paul switched to an emphasis on how to put that theory into practice. What follows is a concise but thorough handbook on applying the gospel in the real world. The gospel is the centerpiece of worship, and Paul outlined the practical roles for men and women in worship and in the home.

**If Paul were writing his instructions today, what meaning would "respectable apparel" and "modesty" have?**

**How are Paul's instructions about behavior in church different for men and women?**

Paul gave men and women different instructions because they are different types of people with different responsibilities in the community. It isn't that one is better than another, but that God designed them to occupy different roles.

**Why did Paul state that a woman should not have authority over a man (v. 12)?**

**How might submission shape both men and women to be more like Jesus?**

Paul came down sternly on the women here in part because of the reputation some Ephesian women had earned as followers of the cult of Artemis—the Greek goddess of love—who was widely worshiped by the pagans of the time. His aim was to prevent immoral, careless, or disrespectful behavior in church. He also reminded Timothy that Adam was created first, and that Eve, not Adam, "was deceived and became a transgressor" in the garden of Eden (vv. 13-14). In doing this, Paul rooted the different roles of men and women in God's created order (c.f. 1 Peter 3).

**What do you think the difference is between being equal in God's eyes and being the same? Why is it important to recognize that difference? What happens when we don't?**

**How does the gospel help us understand our gender roles?**

God created men and women equal but different. He gave them different roles and responsibilities. It is not that women do not have any authority or cannot teach. They are not to have authority over men nor teach them as one who has authority. This doesn't mean women are unworthy in the eyes of God, but that they are different from men, were created in different ways, and have different roles to play.

**How are men's roles affected by what Paul says about women?**

**Why do you think this passage is such a difficult one for many of us to understand and accept?**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Why might men be slow to take the leadership role God requires of them? What things tend to get in the way most often? What can you do this week to step forward in your spiritual leadership role in your home?**

**Why might women find it difficult to understand and live out the role of helper or submissive follower? What things tend to get in the way most often? What can you do to support your husband's spiritual leadership this week?**

## PRAYER

Praise God for the positive ways we see His image in one another. Pray that we would more quickly accept His call to be the biblical men and women He created us to be. Thank Him for His grace in giving us one another, marked with His image and a specific role in His church.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2023-2024 LIFE AND CHARACTER 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-16 1/21/2024

## MAIN POINT

The qualifications of elders and deacons are examples of the life and character Christ-followers should strive to exhibit.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What would your home, your work place, your school, be like without leadership?**

**What would the church be like without leadership?**

**How have the leaders of our church influenced, shaped, and encouraged your faith?**

**Where do you think you would be apart from their influence?**

When we stop to consider where our families, companies, and schools would be without leadership, it becomes clear that strong leadership is absolutely essential to the success of any organization. This is particularly true of the church. While there is much overlap between what we expect of good leaders in the secular world and in the church, they are also quite different. Today we will look at what the Bible says about how the local church should be led. In so doing, we will see what makes leaders in the church distinct from leaders in the world and how following God's design for leadership in the church promotes spiritual growth. We will also see the qualifications of the offices of elder and deacon are not the qualities of super Christians, but rather qualities that exhibit the kind of life and character all followers of Christ are called to strive for.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13.

**Why is the "office of overseer" a "noble task"?**

**Why is it important that elders "desire" their office? How would the church be affected if those who served as elders did so merely out of obligation?**

In 1 Timothy 3, Paul specifically addressed the role of an “overseer,” a term the New Testament uses synonymously with “elder” and “pastor.” It refers to those the church has recognized to lead and shepherd the congregation spiritually. Paul wrote that a pastor does a “noble work,” meaning honorable or excellent. He also portrayed the local church ministry as a calling one “aspires” to (meaning “sets one’s heart on,” “longs for”) and “desires.” The first qualification of an elder should be that they have a passion for helping the church pursue Christ. We must not fall to the temptation of twisting people’s arms to serve as elders or pastors.

**What characteristics of leaders are listed in these verses? Does anything on this list surprise you? Is there anything not included that you’re surprised about?**

**According to verses 2 and 4, what is the connection between leadership in the church and one’s home life? Why do you think this distinction is important?**

“Husband of one wife” could literally be translated “one-woman man.” This phrase does not indicate that an elder cannot have previously been divorced; it means that, if he is married, he is wholeheartedly committed and devoted to his wife. In verse 4, Paul’s emphasis is not that a church leader must be married and have children. Rather, if he has a wife and children, the leader is to manage his own household competently and keep his children under control with all dignity. Of course, Paul did not mean the pastor’s home is a perfect model with no problems. The one answer to Paul’s rhetorical question (v. 5) is, “He can’t.” If an overseer succeeds with his own family, likely he will succeed in God’s family.

**What threat does pride (v. 6) have on effective leadership? Why might this be more of a threat to young leaders like Timothy?**

**Have a volunteer read Titus 2:2-7—a list of important character traits for all believers. What are the similarities and differences between these two lists? Why do you think these traits are singled out?**

These qualities aren’t given to set a perfect standard for each leader. Ultimately, these character traits represent a person who is pursuing godliness and desires to live in Christlikeness. The transformation that the gospel brings will be evident in these areas of life.

**Compare the list for pastors in verses 1-7 with the list for deacons in verses 8- 13. Which standards for deacons are the same as or very similar to the standards for overseers? Which seem to be unique to deacons? Which seem to be unique to elders?**

The second office of the church mentioned in 3:8 is that of deacon, from the Greek word “diakonos,” which means “someone who serves.” The “likewise” in verse 8 indicates the standards for deacons are a continuation of the previous list of pastoral qualifications. The primary difference in the qualification of these two offices is that elders are required to be “able to teach.”

## **What do these qualifications communicate to the world as we proclaim the gospel?**

Understanding these leadership qualities not only gives us instruction when seeking to raise up new leaders, but also gives us a glimpse of what is important to God. Spiritual leadership is about more than just a good résumé. It's about being changed by the gospel — having a life that has been touched, healed, and restored by God—and desiring to see the same transformation in the lives of others.

READ 1 TIMOTHY 3:14-16.

**In what three ways did Paul describe the church? How does each description help you to understand the identity and mission of the church?**

**Why is God so concerned with our character, whether or not we are in official positions of church leadership? How does our behavior reflect either negatively or positively on God?**

Our character is important to God. This is not only true of leaders (1 Tim. 3:1-13), but of all believers (Titus 2:2-7). We all have some level of leadership and influence. It may be in the context of the corporate world, in the lives of our children, or within the church. What we believe and how we behave shows the world who God is, how He changes us, and the truth He has given. When our character matches the personality of God and we communicate His truth to others, our lives can be shown as examples of the power of His grace. Verse 16 reminds us that only through Jesus' power are we able to live a God-honoring life.

## **APPLICATION**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**The qualities that we look for in elders and deacons are qualities that every Christian should strive to grow in. Which of the qualities we discussed is most difficult for you exhibit? What is one step you might take this week to grow in that area?**

**Assess your attitude toward your pastors and deacons. Do you hold yourself to the same standards you hold them to? Why or why not?**

**What can our group do to encourage the leaders in our church? Come up with an idea and implement it during the week.**

## **PRAYER**

Pray for our church leaders by name. Pray that they will feel strengthened and encouraged in their ministry and will continue to exhibit upright, godly character in their jobs and their homes. Pray also that God would empower us to follow their example as they seek Christ.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2023-2024 FAITHFULLY GUARDING AGAINST FALSE TEACHING 1 TIMOTHY 4:1-16 1/28/2024

## MAIN POINT

We grow in our relationship with Christ by never losing sight of the fact that salvation is by grace through faith.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What comes to mind when you think of false teaching?**

**What are some examples of false teaching today? We might we come across false teaching in our daily lives?**

**How can we prepare ourselves to be able to identify false teaching?**

We tend to think of false teaching as unfortunate or slightly misleading, but that is not the way Paul describes false teaching. Paul likens false teaching to “the teachings of demons” and says that it is rooted in “deceitful spirits.” The false teaching that Paul seeks to help Timothy correct undermines the gospel by attempting to add extra requirements to the gospel. In helping Timothy correct this false teaching, Paul encourages us to keep the gospel central in our thinking as we seek to grow in our walk with Christ.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 1 TIMOTHY 4:1-5.

The false teaching that Paul is combating in 1 Timothy 4:1-5 was probably an early form of asceticism: the idea that a person can attain a high spiritual and moral state by practicing self-denial.

**False teaching can sound spiritual and contain some truth. How are some of the most common forms of false teaching today partially true?**



**How does forbidding marriage and requiring abstinence from certain foods contradict the gospel (v. 3)? How do verses 4-5 demonstrate the error of forbidding these things?**

One of the most common forms of false teaching today is to take things God created good and declare them sinful. Many Christians attempt to do this with things like food, sex, movies, or music. All of these things are good when used the way God intends. When we misuse these things, it is not because these things are sinful, but because our hearts are full of sin. Any attempt to claim that people must abstain from certain things God created good misses two important truths of the gospel: that sin originates in the human heart and that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone.

**What are some ways people try to add to the gospel? How might we guard ourselves against teaching that would add to the gospel?**

In verses 6-16, Paul challenges Timothy to diligently guard against such false teaching by studying the Bible and faithfully teaching it to the church at Ephesus.

READ 1 TIMOTHY 4:6-16.

**Given that Timothy was a faithful pastor and church planter, are you surprised to see Paul challenging him to “train yourself for godliness” (v. 7)? What does that tell us about how we should devote ourselves to spiritual growth?**

**How might studying the Bible and its essential doctrines prepare to you respond to false teaching?**

**Compare and contrast bodily training and training in godliness (v. 8 and vv. 13-15).**

When we train for godliness so that God will love us, accept us, or forgive us, we lose sight of the gospel which tells us that we are saved because of who God is and what He has done for us through Christ. We should pursue Godliness not so that God will love us but because God has demonstrated His love for us (Rom. 5:8), has accepted us (Rom. 15:7), and has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32).

**Why does Paul use the verbs “toil” and “strive” when referencing his approach to spiritual growth? Why is spiritual growth so difficult for us sometimes?**

**How might having our hope set on the living God help us endure when spiritual growth becomes difficult?**

**What are some practical ways we could devote ourselves to training for godliness?**

Paul challenged Timothy to faithfully teach the Bible as a means of “being trained in the words of the faith” (v. 6). Toward the end of chapter 4, Paul challenged Timothy to devote himself “to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, and to teaching.” This tells us

that studying the Bible is one of the most important means God has given us by which we can grow in our relationship with Him. It is very difficult to grow in your relationship with someone if you do not get to know them and the most reliable way God has given us to know Him is through His Word. God has also given us prayer (Col. 4:2) and the church as means of growing in our relationship with Him (Heb. 10:25).

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What extra requirements are you most tempted to add to the gospel? How does doing so hinder our spiritual growth?**

**Paul challenged Timothy to set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity (v. 12)? In which of these areas is most difficult for you to set a good example for other believers? What is one step you could take this week to devote yourself to godliness in that area?**

**How might the time you spend studying the Bible need to change in order for you to devote yourself to godliness?**

## PRAYER

Thank God for loving, accepting, and forgiving us through the death and resurrection of Christ. Ask God to help us keep the gospel in mind as we seek to grow in relationship with Him. Pray that God would help us devote ourselves to the study of Scripture so that we would be able to identify false teaching and hold firmly to Christ's gospel of grace.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2023-2024 A HEALTHY CHURCH FAMILY 1 TIMOTHY 5:1-16 2/4/2024

## MAIN POINT

As a family of faith, members of Christ's church should treat one another with love and respect, and this includes wise and compassionate support for widows.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What does the concept of "family" mean to you? What obligations do family members have toward one another?**

**How should the church be like a family?**

**How well does your church reflect a healthy family in terms of its support and respect for one another? Explain.**

Families come in multiple arrangements. Some have no children. Some have two parents and one or more children. Some are single-parent families. Some have children being raised by neither parent. Some have blended previous families into a new, single unit. Some are multi-generational. Whatever particular shape it takes, a healthy family demonstrates respect, support, and wisdom toward one another.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 1 TIMOTHY 5:1-2.

The apostle Paul wrote 1 Timothy to his young apprentice Timothy to offer guidance to the young pastor. These two verses form the foundation and basis for the remainder of the chapter. While Paul wrote this letter to Timothy as a pastor, his words of wisdom apply to all of us who are part of the family of faith.

**What word or phrase would you use to summarize these first two verses?**

**Why do you think Paul used family language (fathers, brothers, mothers, sisters) in describing how to treat people within the church?**

**Does respecting one another mean that we allow them to do whatever they choose? Explain.**

While Paul said not to rebuke an older man, he did not mean for Timothy (or we, for that matter) to allow inappropriate behavior to continue. Instead, we are to exhort one another—as a family, we are to encourage and challenge each other to godly behavior— as we would a dear father, brother, mother, or sister.

READ 1 TIMOTHY 5:3-8.

**What would you identify as the primary principle in these verses? Does this principle apply only to ministry toward widows?**

While the initial subject of these verses is that of widows, “household” (v. 8) broadens the level of responsibility to include other family members who may qualify.

**Why should each person or family take responsibility to support family members?**

**How should we as a church apply the heart and intent behind Paul’s words to Timothy? Are there other groups besides widows to whom we might have similar responsibility?**

The opening word “support” summarizes this section of verses. Some versions refer to “recognition” or “honor,” both of which are appropriate—but the context makes clear that Paul had in mind financial and physical needs as well. As Paul stressed in verses 4-8, responsibility for support initially and primarily fell to family members. However, verse 3 leaves no doubt—if there was no family (or perhaps if there was family but it refused to step up to the need), then the church was to act to support widows. The church might do this preemptively (teaching/reinforcing children’s and grandchildren’s responsibility), as well as directly. A healthy family supports and cares for one another.

READ 1 TIMOTHY 5:9-16.

**It is apparent from these verses (and from vv. 5-6) that Paul considered more than marital status in determining who should be afforded church support. Why would Paul set parameters for whom the church should support?**

**By establishing parameters, Paul also excluded some individuals from church support. According to his explanation, why did he do that?**

**Based on Paul’s guidelines to Timothy, how would you construct a contemporary description of whom your church should support? Can a church maintain both a healthy family atmosphere and a set of parameters for financial support at the same time? Explain your answer.**

In biblical times, societies were much more male-dominated than ours is today. Very few women would have had a legitimate means of self-support if their husbands died before their sons could provide for them. If such a widow had no father or brother to provide support, the woman (and her children, if she had any) would have fallen into a desperate situation. Even so, Paul did not advocate universal widow support. Rather, he reserved that support for those who demonstrated the sincerity of their faith, both in what they did (vv. 9-11) and in what they did not do (v. 13).

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**In what ways does our church or small group support those who need help? How could our church do a better job of being the family of God by supporting those in our church who need support?**

**Are there any needs in your group or among your friends that you can meet this week?**

**How can you or your group provide care for someone in the community this week?**

## PRAYER

Thank God for giving each person in the group the blessing of a church family. Ask Him for discernment and grace for each person in your church. Ask the Holy Spirit to invoke within you an attitude of generosity and sacrifice for those in your church.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2023-2024 LOVING OUR LEADERS 1 TIMOTHY 5:17-6:2 2/11/2024

## MAIN POINT

The leaders of our church serve us well, and we should love them well in return.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is the best job you have ever had? What made it particularly great? What is the worst job you have ever had? What made it so difficult?**

**In which of those two jobs did you feel more appreciated by the people you worked for? What difference did their appreciation make in your dedication to your work?**

Paul taught Timothy that the love we have for people in our church is like that of family. Today we will see how that familial bond impacts the relationships we have with the leaders of our church. As we will see, the leaders of our church serve us well, and we should love them well in return.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 1 TIMOTHY 5:17-25.

**What does verse 17 teach about the relationship between leadership and finances? Why do you think preaching and teaching are specifically mentioned?**

In verses 17-18, Paul instructed Timothy on how to deal with those who were serving Christ well. Paul taught Timothy that those who lead God's churches should receive financial support from God's people (Gal. 6:6). Specifically, Paul singled out those who work hard at preaching and teaching as leaders who should receive pay for their ministry to the believers. The elder's ministry of sharing God's truth was especially important to guard the church against heresy.

**What is the meaning of verse 18 in the context of Christian ministry?**

**How can we give support and help to our church leaders in the coming week or month?**

Paul supported from Scripture his directive to financially reward worthy elders. He quoted Deuteronomy 25:4, which taught the Israelites to let their cattle eat from the grain as they moved about the threshing floor. Paul reasoned that if God wanted the Israelites to show concern for a laboring ox, then certainly He wants a congregation of believers to show concern for their pastor.

**What do you think are the most difficult aspects of being a pastor? How could we, as church members, help make those aspects less trying for our pastor?**

**We have all been hurt in the church—even our pastors. As a church family, our goal is to live beyond resentment or bitterness, press on past the painful moments with hope, and extend grace to one another relentlessly. How have you experienced God’s grace as a part of our church family?**

**How could you extend it more faithfully and sincerely to others—even those who have hurt you? In what way do you demonstrate the grace of Christ as you do?**

READ HEBREWS 13:17-18.

**What reasons for obedience to our church leaders does the writer of Hebrews give in this passage?**

**In what situations might you need to “obey your leaders and submit to them”?**

**What impact does it have on your daily life knowing that your church leaders will give an account to God for their care for your soul? What might we, as church members, be asked to give an account for in how we responded to those church leaders in turn?**

In these verses, the writer of Hebrews challenges us to obey and submit to our leaders. The idea is to follow our leaders as they follow the Lord.

**According to the writer of Hebrews, what is the best way to show support for our leaders (v. 18)?**

The chief support for Christian leaders is not monetary, but prayer support. It takes spiritual weapons to fight a spiritual war, and the chief spiritual weapon is the sword of the Spirit, wielded in prayer. Only with God’s power can leaders accomplish God’s work.

READ 1 TIMOTHY 6:1-2.

Christianity in Timothy’s time was having a transforming effect on the institution of slavery. The influence of Christianity gave masters a sense of accountability to God for the way they treated slaves, and it gave slaves an eternal incentive to be obedient. Even so, Paul treaded lightly here. He cautioned slaves to be respectful, particularly if they had “believing

masters” (v. 2). The New Testament consistently instructs Christians to be servants. Here Paul used the mirror image of servants (or slaves) behaving in a way pleasing to Christ.

**How does this passage translate to our culture today in terms of how we should respond to the requests and demands of those placed in leadership and authority over us?**

**How does this instruction relate to your work situation specifically, either as one in authority or one under it?**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How can we show grace to our church staff this week?**

Take a few minutes at this time in your group meeting to pray for each of our pastors. Then, find a way to let them know that your group has prayed for them and will continue to do so—potentially by assigning individual group members to contact individual church staff members to inform them. You may also consider emailing our church staff before your group meeting to find out if there are any specific prayer requests they have at this time.

## PRAYER

Thank God for the godly leadership in our church. Thank Him for giving each person in our group the blessing of a church family. Ask Him for discernment and grace for each person at our church as we strive to be a church that pleases Him.



# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2023-2024 CONTENTMENT AND MONEY 1 TIMOTHY 6:6-19 2/18/2024

## MAIN POINT

Contentment is a choice to find value in Jesus rather than possessions.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**How do you define contentment? In your own experiences, what have you discovered to be the key to contentment?**

**In what circumstances do you most typically struggle to be content? Why? Are there any recurring themes for you?**

One of the greatest challenges we face as we strive to be serious followers of Jesus is the struggle for contentment in a materialistic society. In order to understand true contentment, we have to reject the notion that contentment has anything to do with accumulating material possessions. Contentment is a choice.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 1 TIMOTHY 6:6-8 AND PHILIPPIANS 4:11-13.

**What similarities do you see between these two passages of Scripture?**

**Why do people believe material possessions will bring contentment? How does Paul's view of contentment compare with the modern world's view of contentment?**

**When we struggle to be content, what are we saying about our view of God and our relationship with Him?**

Paul stated that he was content no matter what his circumstances. The word contentment Paul used in this passage is a term that describes an inner spirit of freedom and discipline, the ability to conquer circumstances and situations rather than be conquered by them. Through the trials and testing he endured, Paul learned that contentment is achievable in spite of poverty or prosperity.

**Read Philippians 4:13 again. What made Paul's contentment possible? What do you think that contentment looks like in real life?**

Because of his faith and trust in Christ, Paul was able to live triumphantly above changing circumstances. In order to find contentment in Christ, we must learn to trust God to meet our needs in the way He knows is best for us. As we see in 1 Timothy 6:6, godliness goes hand in hand with contentment. When we're focused on living God-honoring lives, our contentment is measured by what God is doing in us rather than what we have.

**How does godliness relate to contentment? What are some ways we can strive for godliness?**

**What do you think is the "great gain in godliness with contentment" (v. 6)?**

The word godliness suggests an attitude focused on God and doing what pleases Him. It depicts a reverence that recognizes that we live each moment before God. The more we are like God in our attitudes, actions, and ambitions the more godly we become. And the more godly we become the more contented we will be. Contentment isn't based on what we have, it's based on whose we are. Without a desire to be more and more like the One who created us, we won't experience contentment.

READ 1 TIMOTHY 6:9-12.

**Define greed. What triggers greed? Describe the snowball effect it has on us. Unpack verse 10. What sticks out to you most from that verse?**

Loving money can lead to evil such as betrayal, injustice, perjury, hatred, murder, and more. Paul pointed out two such evils that result from the love of money. One is that some have wandered away from the faith. Jesus said people cannot love God and money (Matt. 6:24). The other evil, Paul said, is that some have pierced themselves with many pains, such as guilt, remorse, and despair.

**How have you witnessed greed affecting people you know, both Christians and non-Christians? How has it affected you?**

Instead of becoming a person consumed with greed, Paul urged Timothy to pursue godly virtues. Paul's charge to Timothy carries with it a definite sense of admonition with the use of such commands as "pursue," "fight," and "take hold." Pursuing godliness requires action on our part.

**What are the godly virtues Paul listed in verse 11? What are some additional examples? Be as specific and tangible as you can.**

**What attitudes or situations typically prevent us from pursuing godly virtues? What is one new practice our group can implement to hold each other accountable to pursuing the things of Christ rather than the things of the world?**

READ 1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19.

One danger for the rich is false pride that leads the wealthy to look down on people who are poor and that motivates the rich to boast about their stuff. The other danger is false security. Paul instructed rich people not to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth. Riches are not a good object for hope because they may not be there when you need them.

**What are God's expectations for people who "are rich in this world," according to this passage?**

**Why is generosity an effective way to combat the false pride and false security that money brings?**

If we want to experience real life, the life of contentment, we must learn to give. Take a step away from the materialism of our age by renewing your commitment to be a giver. Then you lay hold of real life and inner contentment.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Replacing greed with gratitude is the pathway to contentment. What do you have to be grateful for? How do Paul's words to Timothy and the Philippians help you apply this to your life?**

**Think about Jesus' time on earth. How did He model contentment for us? What can we learn from Him?**

**What concrete steps can you take this week to escape the trap of greed?**

## PRAYER

During today's prayer time, give group members the opportunity to verbalize personal prayers for contentment. Pray that as the work of Christ overwhelms all lesser concerns, joy and abundant life would be obvious in the people of our church.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2023-2024 FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT 1 TIMOTHY 6:11-16 2/25/2024

## MAIN POINT

Spiritual growth is a fight that requires fleeing the ways of the world and pursuing righteousness.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Aside from your decision to follow Christ, what are some of the most important decisions you have made in your life? How might your life be different today if you had chosen differently?**

**What decisions do you face on a daily basis? How do those decisions influence the direction of your life?**

While we often think the direction of our lives is primarily set by big decisions like where to work, where to live, what to study, and who to marry, the truth is that every decision we make about what we will pursue contributes to the direction our lives take. Paul understood this and consequently wrote to encourage Timothy to flee the ways of the world and devoting himself to pursuing Christlikeness.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 1 TIMOTHY 6:11-16.

Paul had just warned Timothy against false teachers who were “puffed up” and whose teaching encouraged “envy, dissention, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction.” Apparently, their teaching was motivated by pride and greed, as Paul also warned Timothy against the love of money in light of their teaching.

**What are the godly virtues Paul encouraged Timothy to pursue instead (v. 11)? What are some additional examples?**

**Why is it important that we not only flee from worldly attitudes and actions, but also replace them with Godly pursuits?**

**Which of these virtues do you find most difficult to practice?**

**What attitudes or situations typically prevent us from pursuing godly virtues?**

**How might we encourage one another to grow in Christlikeness?**

This list of attributes or goals is an important reminder that godliness is much more than going to church or associating ourselves with church affairs. Godliness extends into every aspect of life, every response to the opportunities and challenges of the world, and every relationship. These are the priorities of Christians.

**Why did Paul describe the Christian life as a fight (v. 12)? How might viewing the Christian life as a “the good fight of the faith” change the way you approach spiritual growth?**

By challenging Timothy to “fight the good fight of the faith,” Paul made clear that spiritual growth is not easy. Growing in Christlikeness is hard work and it is often painful. It requires persistence, discipline (1 Timothy 4:7), and practice (1 Timothy 4:15). Despite the dramatic stories we often hear about people coming to faith in Christ and forever leaving behind years of sinful addictions, spiritual growth is a difficult process that requires patience and commitment.

READ HEBREWS 12:1-4.

**Why do you think the writer separates “sin” and “everything that hinders” in this passage?**

**What are some things that aren’t necessarily sin, but might keep us from pursuing Christ?**

**How does remembering the work of Christ on the cross help us persevere in our pursuit of Christ?**

Pursuing Christ requires that we not only fight sin but also cast aside every hindrance. It means riding ourselves of any thought, attitude, or practice which impedes our progress in the Christian life. Looking to Jesus is essential to Christian growth because in dying on the cross, Jesus overcame our greatest obstacle to growth—our sin. In looking to Christ, we will find the perseverance we need to follow Him no matter the circumstances. Jesus recognized the humiliation of the cross, but that was of no consequence to Him as He considered the glory that lie beyond it: namely, the resurrection and His sitting down at the right hand of the throne of God. A similar path awaits those who abide with Him and stay focused on Him.

**APPLICATION**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How might your priorities need to change in order for you to grow in the virtues Paul lists in 1 Timothy 6:11?**

**What is something you can lay aside this week in order to more freely seek after Christ?**

**How might the regular practice of spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible study, and accountability, help aid us in fleeing sin and pursuing Christ?**

## PRAYER

Ask God to help the group members identify what might be keeping them from seeing and seeking Him. Ask that as the work of Christ overwhelms all lesser concerns, joy and satisfaction would be obvious in the lives of the people the church.