ENTRUSTED

As recipients of God’s grace, believers are entrusted with the truth of the gospel message.

1 TIMOTHY 1:3-17

Daniel Webster is regarded as one of the epic statesmen in American history. On one occasion he was asked about the most profound thought that ever occupied his mind. Webster solemnly replied, “My personal responsibility to God.” As followers of Christ we feel a solemn responsibility to honor His truth. We have been entrusted with the priceless treasure of the gospel. He has given us the sacred privilege of guarding, living, and sharing His truth.

What family recipes, stories, or traditions have been entrusted to you? How does knowing this information foster a greater sense of responsibility to other family members?
UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

1 TIMOTHY 1:3-17
Paul met Timothy on a second missionary journey as he traveled through Lystra (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy was highly esteemed among the followers of Christ in the area around Lystra and Derbe. Consequently, Paul invited him to join his missionary team as they spread the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. Several years later, Paul trusted Timothy to accomplish the pastoral work in Ephesus and to confront false teachers who were threatening the church.

Ephesus was one of the foremost cities in the Empire, ranking in status just below Rome and Athens. The city was known for its idolatrous worship in the temple of Artemis (also called the temple of Diana). The worship of Diana provided a lucrative business among silversmiths who crafted idols and other objects of worship. The Roman deity Diana was the counterpart of the Greek goddess Artemis. She was a nature and fertility deity invoked for hunting and pregnancy. During Paul’s lengthy ministry in Ephesus, a leader among the silversmiths named Demetrius organized a resistance movement against Paul’s preaching (Acts 19:21-41). Demetrius rightly argued that Paul preached against idolatry and objects crafted by hand to serve as gods. Their real fear, however, was financial and nationalistic. If people believed the gospel that Paul preached, then they would cease their practice of idolatry. If the practice of idolatry stopped, then profit sales would plunge and Diana would no longer be the main attraction for devotees throughout Asia Minor. Consequently, a riot occurred and the city was filled with confusion while the people shouted, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians” for two hours (Acts 19:28,34).

Timothy needed to be strong and courageous in such a cosmopolitan culture steeped in pagan idolatry and sexual immorality. Paul charged him with the task of refuting teachers at Ephesus who spread deviant doctrines contrary to the true gospel.

Read 1 Timothy 1:3-17. How would you contrast the false teachers with the true teachers of the gospel?
MAJOR THEMES IN 1 TIMOTHY

• **Sound teaching**—Paul expressed his concern for sound teaching (1:3-11; 4:13; 6:3-5).

• **Church leadership**—Paul set forth qualifications for pastors and deacons (3:1-13); he also gave specific instructions to Timothy (4:11-16).

• **Conduct in the church**—Paul wanted Timothy to know how people should conduct themselves in the household of God (3:14-15). He gave specific instructions concerning prayer (2:1-7), orderliness in worship (2:8-15), caring for widows (5:3-16), and honoring elders (5:17-22).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

ACCOUNTABLE (1 TIM. 1:3-7)

3 As I urged you when I went to Macedonia, remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach false doctrine 4 or to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies. These promote empty speculations rather than God’s plan, which operates by faith. 5 Now the goal of our instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. 6 Some have departed from these and turned aside to fruitless discussion. 7 They want to be teachers of the law, although they don’t understand what they are saying or what they are insisting on.

VERSES 3-4

Paul urged Timothy to stay in •Ephesus while he traveled north to minister in Macedonia. He entrusted to Timothy the task of faithfully teaching the gospel message in a church that was susceptible to deception and doctrinal heresy. The challenge was clear: instruct certain people not to teach false doctrine. Serious perversions of the gospel threatened not only the health of the church but also the message of salvation. Years earlier, Paul had warned the Ephesian church leaders that false teachers would rise up within the church and lure believers away by deviant doctrines (Acts 20:29-30).

Paul identified the deviant doctrines as myths and endless genealogies. False teachers considered genealogies and myths equal in
importance to the gospel message. The tragic result of deviant doctrines was the promotion of empty speculations. Irrelevant and trivial conjecture sidelined the teaching of the gospel. This truth flashes like a caution signal for the church today. It warns us to avoid two equal and opposite pitfalls: (1) the temptation of enticing doctrine unsubstantiated by God’s Word and (2) the seductive lure of pointless speculations that consume our time and energy at the expense of sharing the gospel.

VERSE 5
Paul reminded Timothy about the aim of gospel teaching. The goal was love. Unlike the crafty false teachers who were motivated by selfishness, Paul emphasized the necessity of sacrificial love. He chose the Greek word _agape_ to express self-denying devotion to God that overflowed toward others.

Paul cited three qualities of this love. First, it flowed from a pure heart. Jesus purifies believers at conversion. However, believers are also empowered to embrace purity as they grow in grace daily. Love from a pure heart enhances right relationships. A second quality of love is a good conscience. A conscience clouded by pride and prejudice impairs love, but a clean conscience edifies others and strengthens relationships. A third quality is a sincere faith. The adjective sincere points to a faith free from hypocrisy.

VERSE 6-7
The false teachers had strayed from genuine love. The inevitable result was fruitless discussion. Their teaching omitted the essential content of the gospel and led to unproductive conversations.

These false teachers aspired to be teachers of the law but were clueless about the meaning and purpose of the law. They steered listeners away from the truth of God’s Word. Moreover, they missed the objective of the Old Testament to point to Jesus as Messiah. Teachers and preachers should allow nothing to obscure the faithful interpretation and communication of God’s saving work through Christ.

*What responsibility does a teacher have to the people he or she teaches? What responsibility does the person being taught have to the one teaching?*
IN LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL (1 TIM. 1:8-11)

8 But we know that the law is good, provided one uses it legitimately. 9 We know that the law is not meant for a righteous person, but for the lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinful, for the unholy and irreverent, for those who kill their fathers and mothers, for murderers, 10 for the sexually immoral and homosexuals, for slave traders, liars, perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching 11 that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which was entrusted to me.

VERSES 8-11

Paul explained that the law is good when used legitimately. First, it reflected God’s will. It was given to show how God wanted His people to live. Second, the law served as God’s plumb line. It was designed to reveal if we are correctly aligned with Him. A plumb line cannot make a crooked wall straight, however. The law could not make us straight before God. Third, the law pointed to the Savior who fulfilled it perfectly without sin.

How does the law point to our need for a Savior? How does Jesus provide what the law could not?

God’s law operated like a bright light that exposed the filth hidden by darkness. Paul illustrated this point by citing a list of sins prohibited in the Ten Commandments. The first three pairs of sins blatantly violated the first four commandments. The lawless and rebellious referred to people who abandoned respect for God and lived without moral restraint. The ungodly and sinful defied righteousness and pursued idols of their making. The unholy and irreverent belittled God’s name and mocked His character. Those who kill their fathers and mothers violated the fifth and sixth commandments.

The sexually immoral referred to transgressions of the seventh commandment regarding adultery. Homosexuality falls under the category of sexual immorality. God’s Word sanctions sexual activity only within the marriage covenant between a biological male and female. Slave traders, liars, and perjurers broadly parallel the eighth, ninth, and tenth commandments.
Paul said that the gospel had been *entrusted* to him. Unlike the self-appointed teachers who spread a false message, Paul stood courageously on the truth of the gospel. Not only was the gospel entrusted to Paul, it is also entrusted to every follower of Christ.

**KEY DOCTRINE: Man**

Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin (1 Cor. 15:21-22).

**IN RESPONSE TO GOD’S GRACE** (1 TIM. 1:12-17)  
12 I give thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me, because he considered me faithful, appointing me to the ministry — 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man. But I received mercy because I acted out of ignorance in unbelief, 14 and the grace of our Lord overflowed, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 15 This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and I am the worst of them. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life. 17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

**VERSES 12-14**

Paul lived with profound gratitude to the Lord. He expressed his adoration by using all three titles of the Savior. The term *Christ* represented His full deity as the anointed Messiah. The name *Jesus* represented His full humanity, and the term *Lord* underscored His sovereignty as Master of all creation.

Paul was deeply thankful that Jesus *strengthened* him. The Lord’s strength enabled Paul to share the gospel despite hardships and sustained Paul during times of suffering. Timothy must have been keenly aware that Paul’s message was written from the squalor of a Roman prison as a testimony to the Lord’s enduring grace.
Paul also expressed gratitude because Jesus considered him **faithful**. Paul was stating that by grace he was empowered to be trustworthy. He also gave thanks for his appointment to **ministry**. He gratefully rejoiced that the Lord had given him the privilege to serve in the mission of proclaiming the gospel. Paul believed he was a steward. He never considered ministry to be a title he earned. It was a gift to be stewarded and utilized as the Lord intended.

Every salvation story is written against the stained backdrop of sin. Paul didn’t flinch to tell his story of having once been **a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man**. As a blasphemer, Paul rejected Jesus and persuaded others to do the same. Paul said also that he was a persecutor. He tried to destroy Christians (Acts 8:3) and persecuted them to their death (Acts 22:4). Furthermore, he personified arrogance and insolence. He behaved like a bully taunting frightened believers.

Paul was delivered from his **ignorance and unbelief** because he was shown **mercy**. He was a highly intellectual and devoted Pharisee, but he was ignorant about the true identity of Jesus. His ignorance was not an excuse to justify his past, but evidence of his need for God’s mercy. Mercy and **grace** are twin attributes of God’s character, but they provide a slightly different effect.

Grace is God giving us what we don’t deserve: salvation and eternity with Him. Mercy is God withholding from us what we do deserve: His wrath and eternity without Him. Paul testified that the Lord’s grace overflowed his life. It was like a gushing river of love that surged by faith into his dry and parched soul.

How does a person’s past serve as a means for God to demonstrate His **mercy and grace**? How does a person’s past become a source of gratitude for salvation?

**VERSES 15-17**

The only place in the New Testament where Paul uses the phrase **this saying is trustworthy** is in his epistles to Timothy and Titus. This is the first of five “trustworthy” statements that declare a non-negotiable truth to be embraced. The statement reveals the reason
for Jesus’ coming to earth: to save sinners. His ultimate and primary mission was salvation. Jesus was, is, and always will be the only hope for a sinful world. He alone provides both abundant life and eternal life to all who repent and trust Him.

Paul freely acknowledged that among sinners he was the worst of them. We never truly see God’s grace as amazing until we see our sin as disgusting and abhorrent. When we dare to look into the foul cesspool of our hearts and admit the sin that so easily captivates us, we stand beside Paul to exclaim, “That’s me!” Notice that Paul expressed the reason for his salvation was to serve as an example of the extravagant patience of Christ to all others who might believe in him for eternal life. Essentially, Paul’s point was this: if Jesus would and could save someone like him, given who he was and what he did, then Jesus is able to save anyone.

As he continued reflecting on the saving grace of God in Christ, Paul erupted in praise. He stacked attribute upon attribute and called God the King eternal. This was a description of God as the supreme ruler for all time. He also referred to God as immortal. He is the one who never deteriorates or decays when everything else fades into obscurity. Paul characterized God as invisible and as the only God. God is Spirit, but He revealed Himself in Jesus, and He has no competitor or rival. Paul responded to this truth by declaring God alone as being worthy of all honor and glory.

How did Paul’s life become an exhibit of God’s grace and mercy?

**BIBLE SKILL: Reading a related passage to gain insight**

Read Romans 5:20–6:4 and 7:14-25. Put yourself in Paul’s shoes as you consider your own life. What is your emotional reaction to awareness of sin? How does it produce humility and a deep sense of need for God’s grace? How does it cause you to be more humble toward other people? Write a prayer expressing your gratitude and commitment to the Lord for His grace.
IN MY CONTEXT

• Teachers are accountable to the church and God.
• Salvation is found only through faith in Jesus.
• Believers are an exhibit of God’s grace and mercy for all to see.

*With your group, discuss ways of holding each other accountable for remaining focused on the gospel. Identify actions the group can take as a whole to safeguard against being distracted by controversies and pointless debates.*

*Reflect on 1 Timothy 1:15. Quote the verse while looking at a photo of yourself and record your emotions. Memorize the verse.*

*Review the information on the inside front cover. Identify one person with whom you can share the gospel. What steps will you take to share with the person you identified (include dates in your steps)?*

Prayer Needs