

STUDY 6

HOW TO BEHAVE IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to explain why the Church is described as the “Household of God”.
2. To be able to defend the importance of teaching in the various ministries of the Church.
3. To compare and contrast the fruit of false teaching with that of sound teaching.
4. To describe the main responsibilities of those that Christ calls to be pastors.



BACKGROUND

Paul was hoping to be released soon after writing this first epistle to Timothy, but he seems to also have had an inkling that he might be imprisoned longer than he anticipated. As a result he, establishes a theological foundation for how to live and behave as a Christian. Interestingly, he builds this foundation on a popular ancient Christian hymn.

INSTRUCTION

Objective 1 - To be able to explain why the Church is described as the “Household of God”.

The expression ‘household’ is grounded in the Greco-Roman concept of those in the care of a *householder*. Householders in the Greco-Roman world of the first century were leaders in their community whose status was determined by their wealth, the number of their servants, their connections, and the level of their influence. Members of a household usually included the householder’s wife, unmarried sisters and sisters-in-law of the householder, the householder’s parents and parents-in-law, the householder’s children, and servants (slaves). The average householder owned one or two slaves, but some wealthier householders owned dozens of slaves or more. Whenever Paul and his colleagues arrived in a town or city, they sought to win a householder to the Lord (Acts 16:15; 18:8). By doing so, they essentially planted a ready-made church with an existing leadership structure.

1. How does Paul describe these converted households according to First Timothy 3:15?
-

The gospel not only transformed the *occupants* of these householder churches, it also transformed the household’s priorities. No longer would it be just a matter of status for the householder, but now it would be a gathering of people who care for each other and extend its care beyond its property and family boundaries.

2. How does Paul’s statement in First Timothy 4:10 reveal what the new priority of the household was?
-

The *h _ _ _ _ _ d of God* was to be a community where *all* people were welcome to meet with God and find equal status and acceptance among each of the other followers of Christ. Its care and concern was extended to women, the poor, children, widows, and even slaves!

It seems that the Ephesians were partial to mythologies (1Tim. 1:4; and fables — things that were not true. Added to this, these young-in-the-lord Ephesian believers were also prone to the falsehoods of the gnostics (those who thought that the material world was evil, and therefore Jesus was not really incarnate, that is, He did not really become a human), and the Judaizers (who taught that salvation came from keeping the law of Moses *and* trusting Jesus as Saviour).

3. While living among a culture that believed lies, how did Paul describe the Church in First Timothy 3:15 in a way that challenged its culture?

Paul wanted believers to b _ _ _ _ e differently than non-believers (1Tim 3:15) so that their witness before non-believers would be reinforced by the way they lived. The standard of behaviour that Paul upholds is that of Christ, the ultimate standard of g _ _ _ _ _ _ _ s .

4. What do we learn about Jesus Christ from the hymn that Paul cites in First Timothy 3:16 and how did it counter some of the false teaching about Jesus promoted by gnostics or Judaizers?

It's worth noting how early in Christianity's history that hymns were written to teach some of the essential doctrines of the New Covenant. [Q. 11, 13]

Objective 2 - To be able to defend the importance of teaching in the various ministries of the Church.

The opening verses of First Timothy 4 addressed one of the two sources of false teaching that Paul was exhorting Timothy to correct: *gnosticism*.

5. From what you already know about the errors of gnosticism, match the following statements by Paul in First Timothy 4:1-3 to the errors of gnosticism -

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| (a) “some will depart from the faith” | — | The gnostics believed that ‘holiness’ was attained by much fasting. |
| (b) “devoting themselves to deceitful spirits” | — | The gnostics believed that marital relations was ‘unholy’ and therefore forbad it. |
| (c) “through the insincerity of liars” | — | Paul identifies these gnostic teachers as being demonically deceived. |
| (d) “who forbid marriage” | — | Some weak believers will be lured away by gnostic teachers. |
| (e) “require abstinence of food” | — | Some of these gnostic teachers didn’t even believe their teaching themselves but were using it as a means to defraud wealthy widows of money. |

6. How does Paul counter some of this false teaching in First Timothy 4:4? What does this tell us about God and the world He has made?

‘Evil’ is nearly always the misuse of something that God has created as *good*. Each of the things identified in the First Timothy 4:1-3 — finances, marital relations, and food — have a divinely intended *good* purpose. But when they are *not* used as God intended, it nearly always ends up harming someone and therefore becomes *wicked* (which originally meant *twisted* or *crooked*).

7. Note First Timothy 4:5. How can we ensure that we always use God’s gifts to us in a *holy* way?

Objective 3 - To compare and contrast the fruit of the false teaching with sound teaching.

Godliness is being *godly*. Put simply, because Christ is the highest example of godliness, therefore we can confidently say, *godliness is being like Christ*. This doesn't mean that we have to wander around Israel in leather sandals! But it does mean that just as Jesus obeyed His heavenly Father, we too must also strive to obey our Heavenly Father as well, wherever He has placed us, and in whatever role He has assigned to us.

8. In what other ways are we to be godly like Jesus?

9. What makes for a 'good' pastor? Note what Paul states in First Timothy 4:6 qualifies someone as "a good minister"? How might this challenge how some people see the role of a pastor?

8. There is a connection between sound doctrine and godliness. How does Paul state in First Timothy 4:7-8 that godliness should be attained and why is this pursuit so important?

You may become incredibly *physically* fit within your lifetime, but your physical fitness will be *eternally* irrelevant. On the other hand, your *spiritual* fitness—your *godliness*—in this lifetime, has eternal consequences! (1Tim. 4:8) This truth was so important among the early church community that it had become a common and well-known saying (1Tim. 4:9). [Q. 13]

9. Perhaps one of the greatest evidences of genuine godliness is a consistent concern for the eternal destiny of the lost. While the Judaizers were teaching that God was only prepared to those who became Jews first, how does Paul's statement in First Timothy 4:10 disagree with this teaching?
-

Objective 4 - To describe the main responsibilities of those that Christ calls to be pastors.

To highlight just how much pressure most pastors are under, one group scoured the positions vacant for pastors and compiled this "Perfect Pastor" list -

The following are the top eight characteristics local churches identified as qualities a perfect pastor should possess.

- 1. The perfect pastor is one who will be able to please everyone in the church and meets each church member's expectations.*
- 2. The perfect pastor speaks the truth, stands up for injustice, but never steps on anyone's toes.*
- 3. The perfect pastor preaches an inspiring sermon every Sunday that makes you cry, laugh, and think deeply about everyday life while still managing to get you out of worship under an hour.*
- 4. The perfect pastor works from 8 in the morning until 10 at night, doing everything from preaching sermons to sweeping.*
- 5. The perfect pastor is 36 years old, and has been preaching 40 years.*
- 6. The perfect pastor has a burning desire to work with the youth, and spends all his time with the senior citizens.*
- 7. The perfect pastor smiles and has a keen sense of humour, all the while keeping a straight face that shows serious dedication to all tasks.*
- 8. The perfect pastor makes 15 calls a day on church members, spends every free moment evangelising to non-members, and is always found in the church office when needed.*

[Q. 11]

10. Read First Timothy 4:11-16 and see if you could come up with a different set of responsibilities for a *biblical* pastor -
-
-
-

APPLICATION

11. If you met someone who claimed to be a believer but they stated that since the early Church met in homes without paid pastors so should Christians today. Based on this, they also told you that our modern churches were unscriptural and so was the concept of having paid pastors. How might you use Paul’s teaching in First Timothy to respond to this?

12. The early church congregations were known as *the household of God* where each member worked together to bring people to Christ and make these new converts feel welcome within their communities. How can we today work together to bring people to Christ and make them feel welcome in our church?

13. What might begin to happen within a church if the pastor stopped preaching the Word for weeks on end because he or she “felt led” that all they needed to do is praise and worship together?
