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**THE PASTORAL EPISTLES:**  
“Qualifications,  
Godliness and  
Departing the Faith” (1 Tim. 3:1–4:5)

2018–19 LCMS Circuit Bible Studies

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**LEADER GUIDE**

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# THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

A STUDY FOR DISCOVERY, MEDITATION AND CASUISTRY OF THE BROTHERS.

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Every pastor strives to do as Paul exhorts Timothy, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

This series of studies has been designed to walk through the Pastoral Epistles in support of your striving toward these ends. Each study will work through these familiar texts with a search and discover mission through self-examination. To facilitate your searching and discovery in self-examination, each text will follow with a template of questions drawn and structured according to Luther’s “A Simple Way to Pray.”<sup>1</sup> “I divide each commandment into four parts, thereby fashioning a garland of four strands.”<sup>2</sup> These four strands are:

1. **Instruction** – What is God teaching me in these verses about the Pastoral Office and me as one called to this office? (e.g., “What have I learned ... ?”)
2. **Thanksgiving** - What is there in these words of God for which I get to give thanks to the Lord of the Church as I serve in the Office of the Ministry?
3. **Confession** - In light of what I have learned in these words of God, how have I fallen short in fulfilling my responsibilities in the Pastoral Office?
4. **Prayer** - Are there things I need to change/improve in fulfilling my responsibilities in the Pastoral Office?

Following the template of questions, there is an opportunity to turn what is discovered into prayer.

While this is a time of searching the Scriptures and reaffirming the Lord’s will for the Pastoral Office and those called to this Office, it is hoped that the questions will facilitate a time of casuistry among the brothers. Listening and learning according to Luther’s four strands will also hopefully foster a sharing of struggles and the mutual support and consolation of the brothers in light of God’s Word, of which we are servants and servers.

**Sequence of this Series:** This series begins with 2 Timothy. While this is the last of Paul’s letters, it is foundational in that it addresses the Pastoral Office more holistically, as well as the means God provides for it and the holder of that office. Second in the series will be Titus, which addresses many aspects of exercising the Pastoral Office in the context of the congregation. Lastly, the series will then look at 1 Timothy as it addresses exercising the Pastoral Office in the midst of a hostile culture and its influences on the congregation.

**Leader:** Work through the introduction to 1 Timothy to get an overview of the context for both Timothy and Paul. Begin the study with some overview of Paul’s first letter to Timothy. Look for those areas of the introduction that touch on the content of Chapters 3:1–4:5.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 43, *Devotional Writings II*, eds. Gustav K. Wiencke and Helmut T. Lehmann, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 193–211.

<sup>2</sup> LW 43:200.

# INTRODUCTION: 1 Timothy from *Concordia Self-Study Commentary*

## 1 Timothy Introduction

Paul, on his way to Macedonia, has left Timothy at Ephesus with instructions to “charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine” (1 Ti 1:3). Paul does not describe this “different doctrine” systematically; but from his attacks on it in 1:3–7; 4:1–3, 7; 6:3–5, 20–21 and from the tenor of his instructions for the regulation of the life of the church, it is clear that Timothy must do battle with a form of “Gnosticism,” an early stage of that heresy which was to become in its fully developed form the most serious threat to the church in succeeding generations. Gnosticism is not so much a system as a trend or current of thought which produced a great variety of systems, often by combining with some already existing religion. It was therefore present and active as a corrupting force long before the great Christian-Gnostic systems of the second century appeared; we have already seen one example of it in the heresy which threatened the church at Colossae.

Basic to all forms of Gnosticism is a dualistic conception of reality, that is, the view that what is spiritual, nonmaterial, is of itself good and what is material or physical is of itself bad. This view affects man’s whole attitude toward the world of created things. The dreary details of Gnostic speculation on the *origin* of the material universe need not concern us here. It may suffice to note:

- a. that the world is no longer viewed as God’s good creation, as the Scriptures view it (that is, a world which God created, fallen with fallen man but redeemed with man and destined to be transfigured with him, Ro 8:19–22); rather, the created world is viewed as in itself alien and hostile to God because it is matter and not spirit;
- b. that man’s desperate predicament, his alienation from God, is no longer seen as being due to his sinful rebellion against God, but to the fact that he is entangled in the world of matter;
- c. that redemption consists in being freed from the material world in which man dwells and is entangled. This liberation can come about only by knowledge (Greek, *gnosis*, hence the name of the heresy); this knowledge must be imparted to man by revelation from a higher world;
- d. the mission of the Savior-God is to impart this knowledge not to all men, but to a select few who will pass it on to those who are “worthy”;
- e. that those who have knowledge, the “gnostics,” must free themselves from the influence of matter by abstaining from certain foods and from marriage. (Sometimes the negative attitude toward things physical and material had the opposite effect and led to a supreme indifference to things physical and material, so that, for instance, the sexual life of man was considered to be morally indifferent.)

Such a trend of thought would lead inevitably to an utter distortion of all that “the glorious gospel of the blessed God” (1 Ti 1:11) proclaimed. God the Creator disappears—all the good gifts of food and drink which He gives are suspected and feared; all the salutary orders which He has established in this world (marriage, family, government) are despised and ignored. The Old Testament, which rings with glad adoration of the God who made the heavens and the earth and blesses man within the orders of this world, must either be ignored or have its obvious sense interpreted away by allegorizing “myths and endless genealogies.” The Law becomes the arena of speculation and vain discussions, not the voice of God which calls the sinner to account and condemns him. In terms of this kind of thought, there can be no real incarnation of the Son of God; for how can the divine, which is spiritual, enter into union with matter, which is of itself evil? And when sin is not recognized as man’s guilt, there can be no real redemption either.

Where knowledge is made central in the religious life of man and self-redemption by way of ascetic exercise is made the way of salvation, there is no possibility of that pure Christian love that “issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith” (1 Ti 1:5). A narrow and sectarian pride takes its place (1 Ti 6:4, 20; cf. 1:3–7). Where the teaching office becomes a wordy, speculative, disputatious purveying of “knowledge” to a select coterie of initiates, it is bound to become corrupted; it appeals to the pride, selfishness, and mercenary instincts of men, and the teacher becomes that ghastly, demon-ridden caricature of the true teacher which Paul has described in 1 Ti 4:1–2.

Timothy’s task will be to let the fresh and wholesome winds of “sound doctrine” into the house of God, whose air has been infected by the morbid and infectious mists of this *gnosis*. To the demonic denial of God the Creator and the rejection of His good gifts he must oppose the glorious Gospel of the blessed God “who gives life to all things” (1 Ti 6:13), the God whose every creation still has on it the mark of His primeval “Very good!”

(Gn. 1:31) and is even in its fallen state “consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (1 Ti 4:5). To “godless and silly myths” he is to oppose the grateful adoration of the Creator. To the Gnostic misuse of the Law he must oppose the right and lawful use and let the sinner hear the fearful verdict of God in order that he may give ear to God’s acquittal in His Gospel (1:8–11).

To the rarefied and unreal Christ of Gnostic speculation he must oppose “the *man* Christ Jesus” (1 Ti 2:5), the Christ Jesus who really entered into history under Pontius Pilate (1 Ti 6:13) and died a real death on the cross for the sins of all men (1 Ti 2:6). He must present this Christ as the whole content of the truth which the church upholds and guards, the mystery of God “manifested *in the flesh*” (1 Ti 3:16). To Gnostic self-redemption by means of knowledge and ascetic self-manipulation he must oppose redemption as the sole act of the Christ who came into the world, not to impart higher knowledge but “to save sinners” (1 Ti 1:15), the Christ “who gave Himself as a ransom for all” (1 Ti 2:6). To Gnostic exclusiveness he must oppose the all-embracing grace of God, and to their narrow sectarian pride he must oppose the Gospel of universal grace (1 Ti 2:4) and thus make of the church a church which can pray wholeheartedly for *all* men (1 Ti 2:1), a church which lives in the “love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith” (1 Ti 1).

To the imposing picture of the Gnostic teachers, these brilliant, speculative, disputatious, and mercenary men, he must oppose the picture of the true teacher. He must, first of all, himself *be* that picture; he dare not let himself be drawn down to the level of his opponents and fight demonic fire with fire; he must do battle, “holding faith and a good conscience” (1 Ti 1:19); he must, as a good minister of Jesus Christ, not allow himself to be infected by what he opposes but must continue to be “nourished on the words of faith” (not knowledge) “and of the good doctrine” which he has followed hitherto. He must train himself, athlete-like, in godliness (1 Ti 4:6–7). Thus he will be able to fight the good fight of faith as a “man of God,” standing in the succession of Moses and the prophets, singly devoted to God’s cause (1 Ti 6:11–12; cf. 6:3–10), taking hold even now of that eternal life which shall be his in fullness at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Ti 6:11–15). He must himself be all that the Gnostic teachers are not; and he is to see to it that the men who oversee the church’s life and administer the church’s charity, the bishops and deacons, are men of like character. They need not be brilliant men; they must be good men. It is enough if a bishop be “an apt

teacher” (1 Ti 3:2); he need not be a brilliant speaker or a captivating personality. The qualifications which Paul sets up for bishops and deacons are singularly sober and down to earth; but the moral standards which he sets up for them are awesomely high (1 Ti 3:1–13). Paul wants men whom the grace of God has “trained,” as he puts it in his Letter to Titus (2:11–12), seasoned, selfless, wise, and gracious men whose faith has borne fruit in their homes, in their marital fidelity, and in the training of their children (1 Ti 3:2, 4, 12).

Timothy had a great piece of work assigned to him. And he was a good man for the task. He was both Jew and Greek (Acts 16:1). He had lived with the Old Testament from childhood (2 Ti 3:15). Prophetic voices had assigned him to this “good warfare” (1 Ti 1:18). God had given him the requisite gifts for it (1 Ti 4:14), and his whole history had been one that fostered those gifts. He had been Paul’s almost constant companion for a dozen years (Acts 16:1 ff.). The apostolic “pattern of sound words” (2 Ti 1:13) had become a part of his makeup, and the apostolic example had been constantly before him (2 Ti 3:10, 11, 14). Paul had employed him as his emissary before this, though never for so extended and difficult a mission as this one. When Paul was prevented from returning to Thessalonica, he sent Timothy to the young and troubled church to establish the believers in their faith and to exhort them (1 Th 3:1–2). He had sent Timothy to Corinth during that troubled period when the Corinthians were becoming drunk on the heady wine of the new teaching, to remind them of the apostle’s “ways in Christ” (1 Co 4:17; 16:10). He had sent him to Philippi from Rome during the time of his imprisonment and had commended him to the Philippian with the finest tribute that can be paid to a servant of God in the Gospel: “I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your welfare. They all look after their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But Timothy’s worth you know, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel” (Ph 2:20–22).

If Paul was a fond father to Timothy, he was not a blind one. He knew his beloved child’s weaknesses: Timothy was still young and apparently conscious of it as a handicap (1 Ti 4:12). He was inclined to be timid (cf. 1 Co 16:10–11; 2 Ti 1:7). Besides, his health was not of the best; his stomach troubled him, an ailment not uncommon among sensitive and conscientious young men of God (1 Ti 5:23).

Therefore Paul writes Timothy a letter which sums up once more the oral instructions already given him (1 Ti 1:3). This letter will give his work the sanction

and authority of Paul, “an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope” (1 Ti 1:1). Paul is in effect telling the church of Ephesus what he had once told the Corinthians: “He is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. So let no one despise him” (1 Co 16:10–11).<sup>3</sup>

## God’s Grace in 1 Timothy

Paul had left Timothy at Ephesus to proclaim God’s grace. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul reminds him of the essential elements of this message. “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men” (2:5–6). “He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory” (3:16). “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1:15) and is “the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe” (4:10).

Paul himself found the gospel of God’s grace to be the source of spiritual strength, faith and love (1:12–14). He encourages Timothy to put his trust and hope in the same message.<sup>4</sup>

## Luther on 1 Timothy

“This epistle St. Paul writes in order to provide a model to all bishops of what they are to teach and how they are to rule Christendom in the various stations of life, so that it may not be necessary for them to rule Christians according to their own human opinions.

“... he charges that a bishop keep true faith and love and resist the false preachers of the law who, beside Christ and the gospel, would also insist on the works of the law. In a brief summary, he comprehends the entire Christian doctrine concerning the purpose of the law and the nature of the gospel.

“... he gives orders as to how widows and young women should be looked after, and which widows are to be supported from the common funds; also how godly bishops or priests are to be held in honor, and blameworthy ones punished” (*LW* 35:388).<sup>5</sup>

**Leader:** Read through 1 Timothy 3:1–4:5 with the brothers, pausing as you desire for thoughts or reflection.

## READ: 1 Timothy 3:1–4:5

**Leader:** Work through the following excerpts to further discussion of the text with the brothers. Encourage each to share their insights from previous study of the text.

**Commentary Excerpts:** 1 Timothy 3:1–4:5 from *Reformation Heritage Bible Commentary: Timothy / Titus / Philemon*<sup>6</sup>

**Introduction to 3:1–13** Having conveyed God’s will that men are to be the ones to teach and preach publicly within the Church, Paul now continues with the organization of the Church by addressing the kind of men God would have to serve in the offices of the Church.

**3:1 The saying.** Paul interjects this to affirm that what he has previously said regarding Church order, and what he is about to say regarding the qualifications of an overseer, has been sought out by other congregations and taught. Cf. 5:17–22; Ac 6:1–6; 14:21–23; Ti 1:5–16; 1Pt 5:1–5.

**3:1 aspires.** Paul affirms aspiring to the office and service of overseer. Since such aspiration could be a mask for selfish gain or greed (6:10), Paul proceeds to check such aspirations against the qualifications that follow.

**3:1 office of overseer.** The Greek term is *episkopē*, (from which we get the English word “episcopal”). It is often translated as “bishop.” The term refers to the responsibility of spiritual oversight, and thus identifies the primary work of the office. The term “elder” is often used in the same way (Ti 1:5); it has its origin in Jewish tradition. The term “pastor” (shepherd) is also used as a synonym for this office, as it carries the oversight responsibilities as well. Knox published an account of the martyrdom of Walter Mill (d. 1558) that illustrated how differently the reformers thought about the office of bishop in contrast to the Roman Catholics. When charged with denying the office of bishop, Mill replied:

<sup>3</sup> Walter R. Roehrs and Martin H. Franzmann, *Concordia Self-Study Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 2:216–18.

<sup>4</sup> *Concordia Self-Study Bible: New International Version*, Robert G. Hoerber, ed., (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 1847.

<sup>5</sup> *Concordia Self-Study Bible*, 1847.

<sup>6</sup> Mark W. Love, *Reformation Heritage Bible Commentary: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 44–57.

I affirm that they whom you call bishops do not bishop's works, nor use the office of bishops, as Paul bids, writing to Timothy; but live after their own sensual pleasure, and take no care of the flock, nor yet regard they the word of God, but desire to be honoured, and called my lords. (234)

**3:1 noble task.** Paul refers to the work of a pastor in this way for two reasons. First, its purpose is devoted to the eternal welfare of those for whom it is done; second, because it is a labor dedicated to giving the gifts of God in Jesus Christ to the saints that they might abide in Christ and be equipped for work of ministry, for building up the Body of Christ—the Church (Eph 4:8, 12).

**3:2 above reproach.** In the Greek, this literally means that the man is “not able to be taken hold of” for failing to measure up to the attributes that Paul goes on to name. While there are several reasons for this, consider two of the most important. First, the pastor, by virtue of his office, is an example to the congregation and to any future pastors that the Lord might call from among the congregation. Second, and perhaps more important, the pastor deals in faith. As a servant of the Word, the pastor uses the Word of God so that the Holy Spirit might work, strengthen, enlighten, and grow faith. The congregation needs to be able to trust the pastor and trust that he believes what he preaches and teaches. This trust is strengthened as the congregant finds him living the faith.

**3:2 husband of one wife.** As there were no seminaries and schools for the pastoral ministry, pastors were usually older men called from among the congregations, which were made up predominately of new converts. As such, their cultural and religious backgrounds permitted unscriptural divorces and the keeping of non-citizenized women (slaves) for conjugal purposes. While all converts willingly forfeited this way of life upon conversion, one serving as pastor could not have this way of life as part of his past, lest it give the people of his past, or members of the congregation, reason to lay hold of him and accuse him of such a way of life. This would erode trust in the man holding the office. In no way does Paul mean that a pastor has to be married. This is a contrast to Jews who required a priest to both be married and have children so that he might learn mercy firsthand and thus be merciful. Wesley wrote:

This neither means that a bishop must be married; nor that he may not marry a second wife [if the first died]: which it is just as lawful for him to do as to

marry a first and may in some cases be his bounde[d] duty. But whereas polygamy and divorce upon slight occasions were common both among the Jews and heathen, it teaches us that ministers of all others ought to stand clear of those sins. (541)

**3:2 sober-minded.** While this might seem to refer to the use of alcohol (see v. 3), it is far more sweeping. At the heart of this term is the sense of “soundness” and “balanced” thinking in all things. A pastor’s thinking has to rest first on the Word of God, and then on mercy. He cannot afford to so indulge himself, in anything, that his thinking becomes imbalanced in the carrying out of his office.

**3:2 respectable.** In regard to how the pastor conducts himself as pastor, husband, father, and the like, everything must be well-ordered.

**3:6 recent convert.** In the Greek, Paul used a term to depict newly planted trees or vines (Gk *neophytos*. cf. Ps 144:12). While candidates for the pastoral office need to be baptized by the water and the Word of God, they need their new life of faith baptized in the real and humbling soul struggles of life that are common to those they will serve. Maturity is a requisite for any candidate, yet Paul’s image begs a deeper understanding of what is needed. You see, without having been long schooled in the daily confrontation with his nothingness in temptation, sin, sickness, and suffering that drives him to Christ alone, such a man might easily lean on the reeds of his own understanding (Pr 3:5). How shall he be able to bring words of Christ’s comfort to those confronted with such realities if he himself has not found life and been comforted by such words (2Co 1:3–4)? The greatest wisdom a pastor must exercise in carrying out his office is that in all things he is nothing, and his sufficiency in all things must come from Christ alone (2Co 3:5–6). This in no way excludes young men from the ministry, but like Timothy, they ought to have been raised in the faith.

**3:6 condemnation.** While this sounds like pride might lead a young pastor to be condemned by the devil, this is not what is being said here. Paul warns that such conceit in a pastor is caused by the same sinful pride that led the devil to reject and rebel against God. The fruit of such sinful pride will bring the same condemnation that the devil received from God.

**3:7 outsiders.** Jesus identifies these as people who have not yet received the knowledge of the mystery of the kingdom of God (Mk 4:11), which is another way of

saying those who have not yet been converted through the mystery of the kingdom of God, which is the Gospel.

**3:7 snare of the devil.** As the pastor's only instrument is the Word of God, his use of the Word, in the application of the Law and the Gospel, will be used by hearers, both inside and outside the Church. If his teaching, preaching, or practice varies, depending on the situation or persons, he can easily be ensnared by his own words and actions, thereby undermining his credibility, and that of his office. The devil has many allies in laying such snares, as Jesus experienced when the Pharisees and the Herodians sought to entangle Him in His words (Mt 22:15–22). When the pastor faithfully speaks God's Word according to the Great Commission (Mt 28:19–20), he provides little or no opportunity for the laying of any snare.

**3:9 mystery.** This does not refer to the personal faith of an individual but rather to the substance of *the faith*. The mystery of the faith refers to all the glorious acts and works of God centering on Jesus Christ, by which He has, does, and continues to save people through the preaching of His Word and the administration of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper (the Gospel). Paul refers to all this and more as a mystery because they are unknown apart from the Word of God and faith. While every person is born with some natural knowledge of God from the fragmented Law of God still written on our hearts, no one can know God's loving nature and saving work toward mankind apart from the revelation that He gives to us through His Word. A deacon must hold to contents of this revelation, so that he might serve according to the faith, and share that faith while serving.

**3:9 clear conscience.** The deacon will need to believe and confess his belief in the fullness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ without any additions or deletions to the content of the faith. He cannot question the truths and teaching of the Christian faith as taught according to God's revelation. There can be no buffet approach to what is to be believed. Just as Christ could not have saved anyone by keeping His preferred bits and pieces of God's promises, but only by keeping all of them, so also, one is saved and serves according to all the promises kept for the deacon and any believer.

**3:15 household of God.** While "household" is a collective reference to the body of believers (i.e., the Church), Paul refers to them as the "household of God," not so much because they belong to Him, but because God dwells in them. This also conveys the reality of all

believers being joined in Christ. God has made them brothers and sisters of Christ and of one another. In this family household of God's making, Christ is the faithful one over the house of God for everyone in the house (Heb 3:6).

**3:15 church of the living God.** While this refers to the assembly of believers in church of the firstborn (Heb 12:23), Paul uses this designation to identify the physical nature of the Church. It is not constructed of physical, dead material, but is built of living stones: those believers who have been made alive through the death and resurrection of Christ, who build upon Him, the living stone (1Pt 2:4–5).

**3:15 pillar and buttress of the truth.** As the Church is a creation of God by means of the truth (that is, the Gospel), God has chosen it to serve as the support and foundation of the Gospel. Having sent the Church out into the world, it supports and bears the truth before the world so that others may be joined into this pillar and foundation of truth. Having been made a pillar and foundation by God through this truth, even though it be housed in the flesh of humanity, the gates of hell itself cannot prevail against it (Mt 16:18).

**3:16 confess.** This means more than to merely say something. To confess is to state that which agrees with the truth (i.e., the Gospel of God in Jesus Christ, which is the mystery of godliness). It is through this faithful confession that the Church fulfills the commission that Christ gave her (Mt 28:19–20). Only by this faithful, continuous confession of the truth, does the Church remain a pillar and buttress of the truth (the Gospel). As we see the Church struggling, we are often tempted to look everywhere, and to anything that offers some kind of revival, yet the Church lives and grows by the confession of the Gospel.

**3:16 mystery of godliness.** So how do you confess something that is a "mystery"? This godliness is not a mystery to the Church, for it is revealed, given, and lived in Jesus Christ (v. 16b) and known through faith. Paul refers to the godliness as a mystery because it cannot be known apart from faith. The mystery of this godliness deepens because it is not found or sustained through the thoughts, desires, words, or works of any person. It is totally the work of God for us in Jesus Christ. Because it cannot be grasped by the mind or heart of humanity, even after conversion, it must always be gladly and faithfully confessed and proclaimed. If you try to make sense of this love and grace that reside in God alone, you

may have godly thoughts and ideas, but none of them will save you in the end.

**3:16 He was manifested ... up in glory.** While these six statements sound like a checklist of the events in Jesus' life as our Savior, it is much more. Greek usually places the verbs toward the end of any sentence. Here, Paul puts the verbs where we find them in the English, at the beginning of each phrase. This makes each of these emphatic statements an absolute truth about Jesus Christ for us that cannot possibly be changed or denied.

**4:1 expressly says.** Paul's statement echoes Jesus as He spoke of the coming of the end of the age (Mt 24:10–11; Mk 13:22). Having received this already spoken truth by way of the Holy Spirit or one of the other apostles who had heard this from the Lord, Paul now states it as absolute fact. This shall happen and there is no turning it back.

**4:1 later times.** While this would seem to point to the time just prior to our Lord's return, the use of the plural contradicts this. The plurality of time (seasons) refers to the ongoing movement of the Church through the various times or seasons of expansion, persecution, struggle, etc. We know these times were upon the Church in Timothy's day, as they are upon us in our day, because of the rebuttal Paul provides for these false teachers in what follows vv. 5–6 (cf. 2Ti 3:1ff). They began with the ascension of our Lord, and they will end when He returns again.

**4:1 depart from the faith.** While this might seem to be addressing a departure from personal faith, it refers to a departure from the object of faith (the substance of what is believed in). It is a departure from the full biblical doctrine and teaching of the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. This can happen by rejecting all of it, denying some part of it, or adding to it in a way that mixes human ideas with God's truth. Paul addressed this issue with several congregations, where false teachers were willing to acknowledge Jesus Christ in some part; but in regard to salvation, they were teaching that He alone, or faith in Him alone, was not sufficient for salvation. These false teachers taught their hearers that they needed to do some kind of additional work by which they could secure their salvation and be confident that they were right with God. Paul's letters to the Galatians and Colossians both address and refute these false teachings with the sole sufficiency of Christ for our salvation.

**4:1 devoting.** This means that they literally held and dedicated their minds and themselves to the false

and evil teachings of deceitful spirits and demons, by continuing to hear them and confessing them as truth.

**4:1 deceitful spirits.** Those contrary to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth. Such deceitful spirits speak through the false teachers (v. 2), and are identified as "deceitful" because they inspire the use of lies (false teachings) to deceive people.

**4:1 teachings of demons.** Literally, the "teachings that come from demons." As "a liar and the father of lies" (Jn 8:44), all such teachings, though they be spoken by various individuals (v. 2), emanate from Satan and his legions. As these teachings come by deception, they rarely deny the totality of "the faith" (4:1a). The great danger for the Church in Timothy's day, as it is today, is that the falsity and error of these teachings, and their consequences, are often not recognized unless they openly deny the totality of "the faith" (cf. Gal and Col).

**4:2** Like human flesh that has been deeply burned with a branding iron loses all sensitivity to touch, so the consciences of such liars have lost all sense of right and wrong, truth and life. Unable to know truth from error according to the author of truth (Jn 17:17), these liars are left to appeal to their own reasoning, which is bound in sin, and therefore in service to Satan. According to the Greek construct, this searing has been self-inflicted. This happens through a continuous hardening of the heart toward the Word of God, by their continued rebellion against the Word of God in thoughts, words, and actions.



## CITATIONS:

### 1 Timothy 3:1–4:5 in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*<sup>7</sup>

**Leader:** The following citations are taken from the 2017 Catechism and serve to further explore and examine the text under review. Discuss how the citations address the question and support its answer.

#### 1 Timothy 3:1–2:

##### Office of the Keys

###### *346. Who should be considered for the office of pastor?*

Congregations are to call men who are qualified in life and doctrine to serve as pastors.

1077 **1 Timothy 3:1–2** The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.

#### 1 Timothy 3:16:

##### The Second Article (Part 1)

###### *155. What do we call the event by which the Son of God became man?*

We call this the incarnation, the great mystery that the true Son of God, who created the universe, entered His creation and became a part of it by becoming a man.

479 **1 Timothy 3:16** Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

##### The Second Article (Part 1)

###### *161. What two natures are united in the one person of Jesus Christ?*

The divine and the human natures are united in Jesus Christ. This personal union began when He became man (incarnation) and continues forever.

519 **1 Timothy 3:16** Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh.

##### Means of Grace

###### *293. What is a sacrament?*

The Lutheran Church usually speaks of a sacrament as a sacred act

A. instituted by the command of Christ;

B. in which Christ joins His Word of promise to a visible element;

C. by which He offers and bestows the forgiveness of sins He has earned for us by His suffering, death, and resurrection.

*Note:* The word *sacrament* comes to us from the Latin translation of the Bible, where the Greek word *mystery* is translated *sacrament*. Originally, *mystery/sacrament* described the saving truths of the Christian faith, such as the Trinity, Christ's incarnation, redemption, and the Church (for example, **1 Corinthians 4:1**; **Ephesians 5:32**; and **1 Timothy 3:16**). Later, *sacrament* came to refer to divinely instituted rites, such as Baptism and the Lord's Supper, to which the Lord attached the promise of His grace. Because they are established by God's command and convey His grace, we distinguish the sacraments from ceremonies and rites established by human beings.

#### 1 Timothy 4:1:

##### The Blessings of Baptism

###### *313. Is it possible for a baptized person to fall from faith and be eternally lost?*

Yes. It is true that God's promises in Baptism stand even if we do not believe them. However, all who reject God's promises to them and die in unbelief have abandoned Baptism and do not receive what God has promised. They will be lost.

1016 **1 Timothy 4:1** Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.

#### 1 Timothy 4:4–5:

##### The Third Commandment

###### *51. What is the significance of the Sabbath for the Church today?*

<sup>7</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2017).

Although God no longer requires us to observe the Sabbath day (Saturday) and other particular holy days of the Old Testament, this commandment continues to apply to our Christian life and worship.

C. God wants us to be regularly engaged with His Word and carry it in our hearts and upon our lips (Psalm 119:11–13). God’s Word is the treasure that sanctifies everything.

140 **1 Timothy 4:4–5** For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

### The First Article (Part 3)

#### 143. *How do I thank and praise God?*

A. I thank God by expressing my gratitude for all that He has done for me.

444 **1 Timothy 4:4–5** For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

### The Lord’s Prayer: The Fourth Petition

#### 272. *For what, then, do we pray in this petition?*

We pray that, in humility,

B. we would receive all our physical blessings with thanksgiving;

906 **1 Timothy 4:4–5** Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

## FOR REFLECTION & MEDITATION

**Leader:** At this point, use the questions to walk back through the text to glean answers. Note that there may not be an answer to every question and responses will vary due to each brother being in a different place in their pastoral ministry. Encourage the brothers to write down their own answers to these and share them as they feel comfortable.

### What is God teaching?

1. What is God teaching me in these verses about the Pastoral Office and me as one called to this Office?
  - a. About Himself – Father/Son/Holy Spirit?
    - › About His work?
    - › About His promises/gifts?
  - b. About me/others?
    - › What have I been given?
    - › What I am supposed to do/not do?
    - › How am I to do what is given me to do?
  - c. About faith/belief/unbelief/doubt?
    - › What is it that I am given to trust in about myself?
    - › What is it that I am given to trust in as I serve in the Pastoral Office?
  - d. About the Pastoral Office?
  - e. About the congregation I serve?

- f. About engaging the communities (civil/cultures) in which I serve?

**Leader:** Here is where the gleanings are turned into prayer and praise. This part of the study may be left to the brothers to do privately. It would be a blessing to ask the brothers to share something from their lists that could be included in a final prayer to close the time of study.

### Praying God’s Word

*Lord of the Church, grant that I may be mindful of ...*

### Thanksgiving

2. What has the Lord told me for which I can give thanks to the Lord of the Church as I serve in the Office of the Ministry?

### Praying God’s Word

*Lord of the Church, I thank you for ...*

### Reflection and Repentance

3. In light of what I have learned, how have I fallen short in fulfilling my responsibilities in the Pastoral Office?
  - a. Is there something God would have me to do that I have failed to do?

- b. Is there something God would not have me do that I have done anyway?

### Praying God's Word

*Lord of the Church, I confess to You that ...*

### Petitions in Prayer

- 4. In all that I have learned, what needs to change/improve in fulfilling my responsibilities in the Pastoral Office?
  - a. What have I been thinking, saying or doing that I need to change/improve?
  - b. What have I been thinking, saying or doing that I am able to rejoice in having done well?

### Praying God's Word

*Lord of the Church, grant the work of Your Holy Spirit that I may ...*

*“This the Spirit will grant us and continually instruct us in when, by God’s word, our hearts have been cleared and freed of outside thoughts and concerns.”<sup>8</sup> May it ever be so Lord! Amen.*

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<sup>8</sup> LW 43:209.