

# 1 Timothy 1:18-20

Instructions to Timothy

Fight, Keep Fighting, Finish!

## THE GOOD FIGHT!



I was still in my 20s, at my second full time position – my second church – and the church was flourishing at the time! It was nothing I had done, and I knew that because I did not know what we were doing. But one Sunday, someone stopped by and attended our Sunday service – a man who was an associate pastor on staff at the big Elmbrook Church down in Milwaukee. I would have been about or 28 or 29 years old at the time, and I didn't feel like any kind of a real leader. I just wanted to preach and be a member of the board and congregation. We were also planning to buy some strategically-located land that we had our eye on so that we could begin a building program. We sorely needed our own building to meet in, so I was very involved in getting that going also. But in my own mind I denied that I had anything special to add to the mix. Well, this man came up to me after the service and gave me a somewhat prophetic word. He told me that he had gotten there early and had enjoyed the interactions of the people before the service. He said it was obvious that something unusually good was going on in our congregation at that time. He said he *felt* that “thing” that everyone was feeling at the time. He went on to say that the auditorium was probably half to 2/3rds full when I had arrived, and had walked down the center isle to get to the front. I was totally focused on the task ahead, but turned aside to say good morning and shake a few hands of people close to the isle on the way up. The man said – *“Kurt, it is obvious to me that these people look to you for leadership. When you walked in,”* he said, *“I knew you were the pastor even though I’ve never met you before.”* He said, *“the whole atmosphere changed in the room. You may not know this, but all eyes when to you.”* He said, *“I perceive that you do not want to acknowledge this, but it is true and you need to accept that and not be afraid to use it for the sake of Christ”*. Well, that brief encounter made a difference in my perception of myself. I really did not want to accept it, as I have always been an advocate for shared leadership – *still am!* But the more I thought about it, the more I began to see that if it was true, it was a human phenomenon that I could leverage, especially in providing vision/direction for the church, particularly when working with the leaders of the church. I was discovering that in practical terms, even leaders need some kind of leadership – myself included. I would be able to advise the board and the church, and influence them in making good decisions about the future of the church purely because of the position I was in and the unwanted gift of leadership. This man's brief word to me helped explain that. I needed to accept and embrace my role of pastoral leadership from then on! Now - I have always felt that that man came to me, out of the blue, to give me a much-needed word from the Lord!



This is the kind of thing that Paul is referring to when He reminds young Timothy that He too had once had a word from the Lord. Someone in the past had had a strong intuition about Timothy that had come from the Holy Spirit **OUTSIDE** of scripture, and it had obviously affirmed Timothy in his role as a pastor and leader of the church. Paul is saying to him that he needs to accept his calling and settle into that role, and then lead vigorously and lead well! He is writing to Timothy to try to influence him in **how** to lead well! To do that, he was pointing out the important things of pastoral ministry, so that Timothy would not make the mistake of focusing on the unimportant ones! Paul is saying, *“Don’t hold back! Throw yourself into the role!”* Especially during those turbulent times, embracing the role of leader meant to **“fight the good fight”**!



Remember, I began this series by asserting that it took adversity in my first two churches to finally figure out that full-time ministry in the church was literally signing up for being on the front lines of spiritual warfare – the real *“War Between the Worlds”* – the war between earth and heaven! It can be a particularly difficult war, because you sometimes have to go to battle against well-meaning people who you love – who you have counted on previously! It is one thing to fight against people you know are hostile to you, who don’t like you, so that you can keep them from doing damage to the church. But it is a whole other animal to fight against people you have worked shoulder to shoulder with in the church – certain people who you have always considered as friends and colleagues in the Kingdom of God! And now you have to stand in their way from doing evil! It is terribly hard! You don’t want to do it because it will break relationship with them – but you know you must! So hard! And you can think of a million excuses to **not** do it – even to quit rather than fight so that you don’t hurt your former friends! But then you realize that you have to man-up and do the hardest thing you’ve ever done! That is actually what was probably going on in the Ephesian church where Timothy was the pastor. Paul was admonishing him to fight the disruptive forces in the church! It was vitally important! **We** need to know the essential elements of “the good fight”? Each of you may be called upon one day to fight that fight, so you better know this. They are not hard principles, but actually quite basic!

# The elements of fighting the good fight

☑ — 1 – **Know thy enemy!** Label them! Labeling them as an enemy does not give one license to hate them, as we are called to “love” our enemies – even the enemies of God! In standing up to someone who is wrong and or/doing wrong in a church context, you are loving them! We do them no favors by **not** confronting bad/damaging teaching or behavior! To do nothing allows evil to triumph and their destruction is assured! To indulge them and let it go is weakness. The Lord’s enemies are your enemies! Label the fight realistically, not euphemistically! A euphemism is using a nicer word to describe or to label something so that we have a better chance at not offending. It can also be avoidance/cowardice. We need to ID who it is, how many are involved, and who is at risk for becoming involved.



☑ — 2 – **Beware self-doubt!** Don’t be afraid to label false doctrine and bad behavior for what it is. Satan and your own insecurities will whisper in your ear “*But who are YOU to judge?*” It is not bad to question yourself – in fact it is important to do so! But when it comes time to act, check your motives, resolve your questions, and do not let your self-doubt paralyze you from doing what is right!

☑ — 3- **Be ready to give an answer!** First, kindly listen to them – discover what they want to accomplish. Try to discover their motives? **Tip:** read their manner – is it Christ-like or is it fleshly-angry/reactive! **Warning:** the really smart ones will maintain their cool, but you still have to assess the value of their argument’s content, or lack thereof, and what their agenda will do to the church if it succeeds! Their manner will usually help you to determine if there is any chance of dialogue/reasoning with them. Pray/study/consult before answering. Get yourself mentally prepared. In the end you have to be left with a good conscience. If not, you may be fighting the wrong fight, or fighting it in the wrong way! A good church fight does NOT feel good, but at the end of the day, God wins, someone may be rescued, and your heart has remained pure

☑ — 4 – **Engage the enemy!** Once you are prepared, don’t delay! Dive in; get started; do it; get it over with! It will not help your peace of mind to procrastinate and have the issue hanging over your head! You will never be more prepared than right after you prepare \*like, for a test!

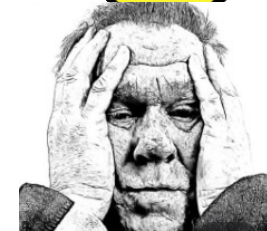
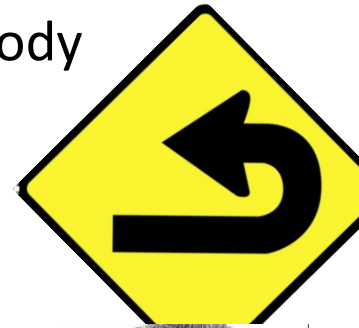
**“Some have rejected these” (holding on to faith, and a good conscience)**

“The faith” these mean had “rejected” is a reference to the apostle’s teaching. Some people decided that they just did not want to trust that the apostles were telling the whole truth about what Jesus had taught when He had walked and talked with them in Galilee, or what the Holy Spirit had taught them as a group since Pentecost. So these people were adding unprovable and unsubstantiated theories to the apostles teachings, or subtracting from it. It was something certain people have done in the church for 20 centuries! Many of these have actually been able to influence the entire trajectory of the church, and it was always the reason why the church repeatedly went wrong! It was why there were 1000 years of “the dark ages”, where the church elevated its own power and subverted learning.



**Medicine, Astronomy, Art, Science, Justice and law, and even Biblical learning** were kept from any substantial advances for fear of the authoritarian church that had amassed more power than the secular government! The average layman could not access the Bible because very few knew how to read, and just in case the average layman *could* read, they would also have to understand **Latin**, which, of course, no layman did! But, by keeping the text (and the entire liturgy of the Mass in Latin), it was like keeping the book under lock and key. It became the **secret** book. Only the church scholars, scribes, and clergy were allowed to read and interpret the scriptures because it was thought by the church powers-that-be that the common man would certainly come to unauthorized and dangerous conclusions! When the printing press was invented and the Bible was interpreted into the common languages, and more people were able to read because of protestant efforts to educate increasing numbers of the masses to read, well, it was soon revealed how far the church had been straying from the text – especially in the area of salvation! The church had left the distinct impression with the masses that their clergy alone had the power to dispense salvation! It was a power grab from Jesus Himself by ungodly and cynical men who were far more interested in – (what else?) – power, control, sex, and wealth! Paul and the other apostles were battling such forces from taking over in the church!

**Hymenaeus and Alexander.** It is believed that Hymenaeus was, or had become, a Gnostic, and that Alexander (and **Philetus**) had followed him into Gnosticism! They followed the line of reasoning found in the Greek philosopher, Plato, and subsequently taught that the human body was just a corrupt physical prison for our pure spirits and that God had no interest in a physical resurrection! They taught that the resurrection had happened already at conversion to Christ, or during the act of baptism [2Tim. 2:17,18]. The apostles believed/taught of a **physical** resurrection, and Paul wrote that if there is no (physical) resurrection our hope in Christ is a false hope and Christianity is a terrible scam, and we should be objects of pity [1 Cor. 15:12-19]! These two men had obviously been people of influence in the church there in Ephesus. They were probably men that Timothy himself may have looked up to at one time. But they had allowed themselves to be sidetracked, to the point where Paul had taken the radical measure of “turning them over to Satan”. He had done this one other time that we know of in [1 Cor. 5:5] where he advised the Corinthian church to turn a man in their church over to Satan – someone in their midst who was living with, or married to, His father’s wife! The church had evidently taken no measures to address this detestable development, and Paul urges them to take this drastic measure as it was really effecting the church in a negative way. This “handing over” to Satan obviously has physical ramifications – like what happened to Job when God took His protective hand away and allowed Satan to assault his physical life! Satan took **everything** from Job – even his health – (but not his life)! The purpose of taking this terrible measure in the most extreme cases was not revenge, but to get these false teachers to reconsider their reckless path, turn around, and come back to Jesus! Satan evidently cannot refrain from demolishing even his own servants if he is given a free hand to do so! Timothy would not talk to Satan to do this. He would talk to God to take his protective hand away! Satan would do the rest!



[1 Cor. 15:13,14] - The bottom line – do not go off on rabbit trails, as they are often NOT harmless! Stick to the apostles teachings and what is truly important!! Fight to keep bad teaching, bad intentions, and bad behavior out of the church, or they will take over and corrupt the church and its future!