

WEEK 5: October 4–10, 2026

Reading: 1 Timothy 1–6; 2 Timothy 1

Principal Chapter: 1 Timothy 4

Spiritual Practice: Scribe

Core Emphasis: Training in Godliness and
Becoming an Example to Believers

Read a CHAPTER a Day

SMALL GROUP LEADERS' GUIDE

Leader Preparation Checklist

- ☐ **Read 1 Timothy 1–6 and 2 Timothy 1.** Mark repeated words and themes: *sound teaching, grace, godliness, faith, conscience, prayer, contentment, money, leadership, endurance, guarding the faith, and the gift of the Spirit.*
- ☐ **Prioritize the themes of training in godliness and being an example.** Focus especially on 1 Timothy 4:6–16, and let the rest of the week's readings illuminate faithful leadership, prayerful community, contentment, and perseverance.
- ☐ **Review the historical note below.** Prepare to speak about “godliness” as a life shaped by devotion to God and love of neighbor, rather than as moral superiority, religious performance, or control over others.
- ☐ **Prepare for the spiritual practice: Scribe.** Practice writing out 1 Timothy 4:7–8 and 4:12 slowly. Have pens and paper, index cards, or journals available. If meeting online, encourage participants to bring a journal or paper.
- ☐ **Prepare the meeting space.** Display the key passages if possible. Consider offering quiet instrumental background music during the writing portion if it helps the group.
- ☐ **Pray for each participant by name.** Ask the Holy Spirit to form the group in humility, love, faithfulness, courage, and holy living.

Historical Note on 1 & 2 Timothy:

Background: 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy reflect a focus on care, leadership, teaching, and the life of the Christian community. These two books are said to have been written by Paul to Timothy, his younger colleague in Ephesus, offering advice on leading the community with sound teaching, prayer, integrity, generosity, and respect.

In 1 Timothy, Paul tells Timothy to study teaching on faith and how to live a godly life. He compares this to athletic training, since regular practice builds strength and skill. Likewise, disciples grow through habits that shape love, character, and faithfulness. For Paul, godliness is not a means of earning salvation but a response to God's grace and a life guided by the Spirit.

Paul also advises Timothy not to let others look down on him because of his youth. Instead, he should serve as an example by the things he says, the way he acts, and the strength of his love, faith, and purity; the aim should not be perfection but integrity so that his words and actions reflect Christ.

The content relates to the main topic of the letters: 1 Timothy speaks about prayer, leadership, caring for vulnerable people, contentment, generosity, and the dangers of seeking wealth. In 2 Timothy, Timothy is instructed to remember the gift God has given him and to live with power, love, and self-discipline instead of fear.

Interpretive Care: Certain sections of these letters may raise difficult questions about authority, gender, leadership, wealth, age, and the structure of the church. The session should remain focused on training in godliness, setting a faithful example, and living a life guided by love.

Don't employ words like "godliness," "purity," or "example" to shame people, compel them to conform, or imply that anyone has to win God's approval. Grace from God comes first. Spiritual practices are not about proving ourselves; they are about opening ourselves to God's transforming love. The idea of abounding in godliness is not intended to lead to comparison or self-criticism. Instead, it urges us to form habits that will help us receive God's grace and grow in love. The need to serve as an example does not mean one has to be perfect; it just means that our speech, behavior, love, faith, and integrity should reflect Christ more fully.

The subjects involved might raise delicate questions about age, authority, leadership, gender, money, contentment, work, purity, spiritual discipline, shame, or past experiences of religious control.

Do not regard Paul's appeal for us to be an example as a requirement for perfection or as a justification for judging people who struggle, fail, have disabilities, grieve, or suffer from mental health issues. When mentioning "purity," do so with care, emphasizing integrity, respect, and freedom from exploitation rather than fear or shame.

If the conversation becomes difficult, you may say: "The call that God makes for us to grow in godliness is by no means a chance to make one another ashamed. He meets us where we are and shapes us out of love. Let us be honest when we speak, show compassion when we listen, and encourage one another in Christ."

Opening (8 min)

Welcome & Check-In

Welcome participants warmly by name. Briefly explain the purpose of the gathering, then invite one-sentence responses.

Check-in Question: What habit, practice, or relationship has contributed to strengthening your faith over time?

Opening Prayer

Faithful God, we are meant to develop in grace and godliness. As we listen to your Word, nourish us with the truth of the gospel, strengthen us by your Spirit, and shape our character through the things we say, the ways we behave, and the practices of love, faith, and purity. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Key Themes (10 min)

As you read 1 Timothy 1–6 and 2 Timothy 1, which words, images, or ideas struck you? The letters address many aspects of church life, but we will focus on three subjects: training in godliness, serving as an example through Christlike character, and protecting the gift of faith with courage and love.

Training in Godliness: Paul compares godliness to physical training. Although physical exercise is beneficial, training in godliness has lasting value since it shapes the entire person and directs our lives toward God. This kind of training is not concerned with self-improvement alone but is a means of participating in God's grace through prayer, scripture, worship, service, generosity, and love.

- Key passages: 1 Timothy 4:6–10; 6:6–8
- What might it mean to have the idea of being trained in godliness during an ordinary week?

Serving as an example for believers: Paul advises Timothy to serve as an example in what he says, how he acts, and how he models love, faith, and purity. Christian witness has nothing to do with one's position, age, rank, or perfection; it means living in a way that our words, actions, relationships, and commitments reflect Christ's character.

- Key passages: 1 Timothy 4:11–16; 2 Timothy 1:6–8.
- Which of the elements of Paul's invitation, namely, his speech, behavior, love, or faith, seem the most encouraging? Which is the most difficult?

Contentment, generosity, and faithful stewardship: First Timothy tells us not to regard wealth as equivalent to godliness or security. Paul values contentment, generosity, and trust in God. Godliness is shown by how we use what we have, how we care for others, and how we avoid judging our worth by status or possessions.

- Key passages: 1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19.
- What parts could contentment and generosity play in the training connected with godliness?

First and Second Timothy state that godliness is developed through consistent practices of grace. As individuals grow, their speech, behavior, love, faith, and integrity become a practical testimony to Christ.

Historical Context (8 min)

Who Is Writing? The First and Second Letters to Timothy are attributed to Paul, who wrote them to Timothy, a young colleague he supported in his ministry and leadership.

To Whom? Timothy carried out work for the church in Ephesus, a city now in Turkey, and the letters address the problems of establishing a Christian community in such an intricate urban environment.

What Is Happening? The church needed advice on teaching, prayer, leadership, caring for vulnerable people, wealth, and living faithfully together. Paul instructed Timothy to remain firm in the gospel, reject teachings that lead to speculation or division, and lead with love and integrity.

- Because of his youth, people have doubted Timothy's authority, and his capacity to lead. But Paul encouraged him not to be afraid and to let the character of his life and ministry stand as an example to the believers.
- Paul encourages Timothy to remain faithful in difficult situations, guard the gift God has given him, and trust the Spirit, which bestows power, love, and self-discipline.

Why Does This Matter? The letters remind the church that discipleship is evident in everyday life through actions such as prayer, conversation, service, leadership, generosity, care for others, and remaining faithful during difficult times. Godliness is not private spirituality; it is a way of living that is visible within the community.

Leader Note: *1 Timothy focuses on the practical aspects of Christian life. Timothy is urged to keep growing in his faith, teach with integrity, and serve as an example through his words, actions, love, faith, and purity. It teaches that discipleship requires time and practice and that we do not earn God's love but instead strive for godliness, since God's grace is at work in us, shaping us to reflect Christ in our everyday lives.*

- Which part of this historical background helps you understand Paul's concern about training and setting an example?
- What influence does this context have on the way you understand the words Paul writes to Timothy?

Reflection on Personal Practice (10 min)

Invite participants to share their experience of reading Galatians each day during the week. Remind participants that Read a Chapter a Day isn't about just finishing the reading each day or learning information. Read a Chapter a Day becomes a spiritual practice when we pay attention to God speaking and moving through scripture.

Ask one or both questions:

- What has been the easiest or most difficult part about reading one chapter each day this week?
- Can you recall occasions in 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy in which you felt God talking to you, encouraging you, criticizing you, or surprising you?

Ask three or four people to make short remarks; if there are many participants, ask for brief comments so a variety of voices can be heard.

Individuals have different experiences; some might feel encouraged by the appeal to train in godliness, while others might feel guilty, exhausted, or recall having undergone previous spiritual pressure. You might say: "Thank you for

having been so open. We do not demonstrate our value to God through spiritual practices. Instead, such practices provide a place for God's grace, which is already at work. Even minor and consistent acts of faithfulness can be situations in which God shapes us out of love."

Spiritual Practice: Scribe (7 min)

This week's spiritual practice is **Scribe**. Scribe urges us to write a word, a phrase, or a passage from scripture by hand to slow down, become aware of each word, and receive the text as if it were a prayer.

Instruction: Provide pens and paper, index cards, or journals. For online meetings, ask participants to use a journal or a blank sheet of paper.

Scripture: Read 1 Timothy 4:8,12 (*suggested translation NRSVUE or NIV*) aloud slowly. Ask the participants to write one or both verses slowly, pausing between phrases and recording the word or phrase that speaks most directly to them.

Response: Say, "When you are writing, take all the time you need. Pay attention to any words that encourage you, challenge you, or surprise you. You could write out the entire verse, highlight one word, or compose a brief prayer as a response. It isn't necessary for what you write to be carefully polished. Just let the words of scripture get into your heart."

- Allow participants two to three minutes to write. Then ask, "What word, phrase, or prayer occurred to you while you were writing?"

Training in godliness comes from consistently giving one's attention and placing one's trust. As we write, we allow God to shape our speech, behavior, love, faith, and integrity.

Application & Discussion Questions (10 min)

Discussion Questions

- **Training in godliness:** What practices help you to become more open to God's grace and more firmly rooted in love?
- **The cultivation of one's spirituality with no performative elements:** How are we to carry out spiritual disciplines without them becoming a means of comparing ourselves with one another or of demonstrating our worth?
- **Being an example:** Regarding any of the areas such as speech, behavior, love, faith, or purity, which one do you think that God is telling you to develop more deliberately?
- **Contentment and generosity:** What are we learning from 1 Timothy 6 about the relationship between contentment, money, generosity, and godliness?

Leader Note: If the conversation becomes abstract, return to the text: "What do you notice in 1 Timothy 4? Which word or phrase allows us to understand Paul's message more clearly?" If time allows, connect this week's texts with John Wesley's understanding of sanctifying grace:

- The grace of God doesn't simply forgive but also causes transformation.
- Sanctifying grace molds us into holy love.
- The ways we pray, study the Bible, worship, serve, fast, and take part in the Christian community can serve as means through which God shapes us.
- No amount of practice can win over God; we carry out these actions because God's grace attracts us and retains us.

Application/Invitation/Call to Action

Allow a brief silence, then ask one or both questions:

- What simple, sustainable practice could help you train in godliness this week?
- How can you demonstrate love for Christ in what you say and do, how you love others and express your faith, or how you live with integrity?

This might consist of reading a scripture to yourself, adopting a new spiritual practice this week, or choosing to reflect Christ more fully in one area of your life (such as praying before a difficult conversation, showing generosity, encouraging someone, serving in a quiet way, or selecting one word from 1 Timothy 4:12 for use in your daily prayer.)

Prayer & Sending (5 min)

Shared Prayer

Invite two or three participants to name brief prayer concerns:

- A personal need
- A place where they desire growth, courage, or greater faithfulness
- A person who is learning, leading, or serving
- A concern for the church or world

You may say: “As we prepare to pray, you may share a personal concern, a place where you want God’s strength and growth, the name of a person you want to encourage, or a concern for the church or the world.”

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, you call us to grow in godliness and be examples of your love. Nourish us with the words of faith and strengthen us by your Spirit. Form our speech, conduct, love, faith, and integrity so that our lives may be a reflection of Jesus Christ. Give us contentment in what we have, generosity toward those in need, courage in the face of fear, and steady faithfulness in all our actions. Amen.

Reminders

Before participants leave, make sure they know to:

- Continue to keep up your daily habit of reading the assigned passages for next week, which are 2 Timothy 2-4; Titus 1-3; and Philemon 1. Look at the chart that includes the focus scripture for daily readings.
- Go to the weekly Read a Chapter a Day small-group meeting.
- Go to the Read a Chapter a Day Facebook group and read the weekly email to get encouragement and to take part in the conversations.

Leader Notes & Reflection

For Next Week

- Which question or activity generated the most meaningful conversation?
- Where did the group need more time, clarity, or pastoral care?
- What change would help next week's session be more hospitable and fruitful?

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.