



Questions for Personal Reflection or Small Group Study

First and Second Timothy, Titus

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CATHOLIC COMMENTARY ON SACRED SCRIPTURE

In addition to the questions below, the Reflection and Application sections throughout the commentary suggest various ways of acting on the message of the Pastoral Letters.

1 Timothy 1

1. What experiences in your life does the phrase “grace, mercy, and peace from God” (v. 2) bring to mind?
2. Do you tend to think of fellow members of the Church as brothers and sisters in Christ? How might your behavior toward them change if you were more conscious of being members of one family in Christ?
3. Has one member of your family been a particular guide to Christian living for you—a kind of “mother” or “father” in faith? If so, is there some aspect of that person’s life that you might try to imitate?
4. Paul addresses the tendency to allow religious knowledge to remain on the level of discussion rather than allowing it to lead us to “love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith” (vv. 4–6). Do you experience this as a temptation? How can a person guard against it?
5. In what ways could you not make Paul’s words in vv. 15–16 your own? In what ways could you make his words your own?
6. In what ways is the Christian life a “fight” (v. 18)? Where you need to fight, how well are you fighting?

1 Timothy 2

1. In your personal prayer, how do you respond to Paul’s request in vv. 1–2?
2. Paul’s words in vv. 3–6 express the basis for Christian evangelization and missionary work in the world. What contribution to this work are you called to make?
3. Paul teaches that putting aside anger and rivalry and adopting an attitude of humility is essential for worthily celebrating the liturgy (vv. 8–15). How might his words guide you to better prepare for participating in the liturgy?

1 Timothy 3

1. From your own experience or from observation, can you recall how the presence or absence of one of the qualities that Paul mentions in this chapter (vv. 2–3, 8–9, 11) made a crucial difference in a person succeeding or failing in his or her role of Christian service? What lessons might be drawn from this?

2. Among these qualities of character, which seems of particular importance to you at this point in your life? What step should you take to grow in this quality?
3. What responsibilities do Christian parents have for raising their children in the faith? What are the limits of those responsibilities?
4. In what ways is the gospel a “mystery” (v. 16)? What aspects of the gospel can be understood? What aspects cannot be fully understood? What is the importance of recognizing that the faith is a mystery?

1 Timothy 4

1. Why do religious people sometimes tend to regard sex and eating as less than good or as incompatible with spirituality (v. 3)? What can be done to foster the balanced approach that Paul teaches in vv. 3–5?
2. Paul speaks of “training” (vv. 7–8). What kinds of disciplines are important for growing as a Christian and serving the Lord effectively? Do you tend to place too much or too little emphasis on discipline and training?
3. Is there a tendency in the Church to depreciate the holiness and abilities of young people (v. 12)? If so, why, and what can be done to remedy this?
4. In particular, what kind of reception do young priests receive within Catholic parishes? How should older Catholics relate to much younger priests?
5. Paul wants Timothy to focus on his calling (vv. 15–16). What helps you stay focused on what the Lord wants you to be doing?

1 Timothy 5

1. Paul advises Timothy to develop a sensitivity to different kinds of people (vv. 1–2). How can a person grow in being attentive to each person’s unique personality and needs? Who do you know that is a good example of this way of relating to people? What can you learn from their example?
2. What are the problems with gossip (v. 13)? Do you gossip? If so, what message do you hear for yourself in this reading?
3. Both men and women have family responsibilities (v. 16). Are there members of your own family who need your help in some way?
4. Sometimes people believe accusations against other people based on insufficient evidence (see v. 19). What effect does this have on relationships with the parish and the larger Church? What can be done about this problem?

1 Timothy 6

1. Paul’s instruction in vv. 1–2 is based on the principle that one should deal honestly and fairly with everyone, even those who do not deal honestly and fairly with us. In what ways can you apply this principle in your life right now?
2. Paul here is conscious of the fact that other people tend to evaluate Christianity on the basis of what they see in the lives of Christians. Is there an aspect of your life that might tend to detract from the credibility of the gospel in the eyes of someone who knows you?
3. What is the message for you in Paul’s words about material possessions (vv. 6–10, 17–19)? What response to this message will you make?
4. Paul urges Timothy to view his Christian service in terms of Christ’s return and final judgment. From that perspective, what aspect of your life or service would you like to adjust?

2 Timothy 1

1. Reread v. 6. While only a few Christians are ordained to ministry with the laying on of hands, all are gifted with gifts of service by the Holy Spirit through baptism. What gifts of service has God given you? What could you go about stirring them up?
2. In what situation might Paul’s words in v. 7 have special application for you? What application do his words have?
3. In what way does your response to the gospel involve “hardship” (v. 8)? Are you relying on the Spirit to help you?
4. Paul speaks of God’s “design” for our lives (v. 9). Has any particular experience helped you realize that God has a plan for your life?
5. Paul is “not ashamed” of being publicly associated with Jesus Christ (v. 12). What might cause a person to feel hesitant to be identified with Jesus today? What is your experience of this issue?
6. While Paul’s instruction in vv. 13–14 refers to carrying out pastoral responsibilities, it also bears a message for every Christian. What should be your response to Paul’s words?
7. When you have been discouraged or stressed, who has been an Onesiphorus for you (v. 16)? What opportunity do you have now to do the same for someone else?

2 Timothy 2

1. Paul advises Timothy to keep clear in his mind the purposes that God has for his life and service (vv. 1–7). What purposes does God want you to keep clearly in mind? (If you reflect on this, “the Lord will give you understanding” [v. 7].)
2. Day by day, what aids help you to “remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead” (v. 8)? What distractions interfere with remembering him?
3. Reread v. 10. Is the Lord inviting you to offer him suffering in your life on behalf of those to whom he wishes to bring the gospel?
4. Is there a particular situation in your life in which vv. 11–13 provide an apt encouragement? (If so, consider memorizing these lines.)
5. When have you regretted getting into a useless argument over religion (vv. 14, 23)? What lessons have you learned from this kind of experience?
6. What is the most important thing for you to be doing now in order to respond to Paul’s exhortation in v. 22?
7. Have you ever seen or experienced a gentle correction (vv. 24–25) having a great effect?

2 Timothy 3

1. How easy is it to attribute the qualities Paul mentions in vv. 2–5 to *other* people? What makes it difficult to read these verses as a description of ourselves? What can help a person discover the ways in which Paul’s description applies to himself or herself?
2. Paul calls Timothy to be faithful to the example of Paul’s teaching and way of life (v. 14). How can the teachings and lives of the saints help us steer clear of distorted religious ideas and attitudes (v. 13)?
3. In your own life, how might you make better use of Scripture for the purposes Paul gives in vv. 16–17?

2 Timothy 4

1. If Paul were to have written the solemn charge in vv. 1–2 to you personally, what roles of service would he have called you to have patience and persistence in carrying out?
2. Paul calls Timothy to be a good teacher, even though some people will not respond well to his teaching (vv. 1–3). What sort of misunderstanding or opposition do you encounter as you try to carry out your responsibilities of service? In response, do you ever give in to fear? discouragement? anger? If so, how could you grow in following Paul’s instruction in v. 5?
3. When have you had the experience of the Lord standing by you and giving you strength, even though you seemed to lack much support from other people (v. 17)? What lesson is to be learned from this experience?
4. What message might Paul’s words in vv. 16–18 have for you regarding something about which you are fearful or anxious?

Titus 1

1. How does “the hope of eternal life” (v. 2) impact your thinking, your priorities, your desires, your decisions?
2. What does the quality of being “hospitable” (v. 8) mean for you in your situation in life? How can you express hospitality?
3. Paul makes a generalized criticism of the values of Cretan culture (v. 12). *If you were to include yourself in the critique*, what kind of criticism of the values of your own contemporary culture would you make? Where do you find it especially difficult to struggle against these values? How can Christians work together to live according to better values, values in line with God’s view of what is good for human persons?

Titus 2

1. Paul speaks of various age groups within the church community (vv. 3–6). Are there specific qualities of character that are especially important in particular stages of life? What challenge to grow in character and virtue are you facing at your stage of life? What kind of support should you secure to help you grow?
2. Paul’s vision for Christians in various sex and age groups (vv. 1–8) reflects both timeless Christian principles and the cultural expectations of the day. If you were to update his instructions, what modifications would you make in his advice? What aspects of his advice would be important to leave unchanged?
3. Paul’s combination of “grace” and “training” (v. 11–12) might be surprising to some. Is relying on God’s help incompatible with our making the greatest personal effort? How have you experienced the working together of God’s grace and the human dimension of effort and struggle to do what is right and to avoid sin?

Titus 3

1. What might be the application of Paul’s words in v. 2 to some situation in your own life—at work, at home, on the expressway . . . ?
2. Paul is acutely conscious that Christian living is based on God’s mercy and on God changing us (vv. 3–7). Why is this so important? How has your own experience shown you the importance of this realization?