

1 TIMOTHY

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# TO THE HOUSEHOLDER



9 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR  
SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS



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SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

PHILLIP D JENSEN  
AND GREG CLARKE



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*To the Householder*

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## » HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THESE STUDIES

### 1. What is an Interactive Bible Study?

Interactive Bible Studies are a bit like a guided tour of a famous city. They take you through a particular part of the Bible, helping you to know where to start, pointing out things along the way, suggesting avenues for further exploration, and making sure that you know how to get home. Like any good tour, the real purpose is to allow you to go exploring for yourself—to dive in, have a good look around, and discover for yourself the riches that God’s word has in store.

In other words, these studies aim to provide stimulation and input and point you in the right direction, while leaving you to do plenty of the exploration and discovery yourself.

We hope that these studies will stimulate lots of ‘interaction’—interaction with the Bible, with the things we’ve written, with your own current thoughts and attitudes, with other people as you discuss them, and with God as you talk to him about it all.

## 2. The format

Each study contains five main components:

- sections of text that introduce, inform, summarize and challenge
- a set of numbered study questions that help you examine the passage and think through its meaning
- sidebars that provide extra bits of background or optional extra study ideas, especially regarding other relevant parts of the Bible
- an ‘Implications’ section that helps you think about what this passage means for you and your life today
- suggestions for thanksgiving and prayer as you close.

## 3. How to use these studies on your own

- Before you begin, pray that God would open your eyes to what he is saying in the Bible, and give you the spiritual strength to do something about it.
- Work through the study, reading the text, answering the questions about the Bible passage, and exploring the sidebars as you have time.
- Resist the temptation to skip over the ‘Implications’ and ‘Give thanks and pray’ sections at the end. It is important that we not only hear and understand God’s word, but also respond to it. These closing sections help us do that.
- Take what opportunities you can to talk to others about what you’ve learnt.

## 4. How to use these studies in a small group

- Much of the above applies to group study as well. The studies are suitable for structured Bible study or cell groups, as well as for more informal pairs and triplets. Get together with a friend or friends and work through them at your own pace; use them as the basis for regular Bible study with your spouse. You don’t need the formal structure of a ‘group’ to gain maximum benefit.

- For small groups, it is *very useful* if group members can work through the study themselves *before* the group meets. The group discussion can take place comfortably in an hour (depending on how sidetracked you get!) if all the members have done some work in advance.
- The role of the group leader is to direct the course of the discussion and to try to draw the threads together at the end. If you are a group leader, the material in the appendix ‘Tips for leaders’ will help you think through how to use these studies in a group setting.
- If your group members usually don’t work through the study in advance, it’s extra important that the leader prepares which parts to concentrate on, and which parts to glide past more quickly. In particular, the leader will need to select which of the ‘Implications’ to focus on.
- We haven’t included an ‘answer guide’ to the questions in the studies. This is a deliberate move. We want to give you a guided tour of the Bible, not a lecture. There is more than enough in the text we have written and the questions we have asked to point you in what we think is the right direction. The rest is up to you.

## 5. Bible translation

Previous editions of this Interactive Bible Study have assumed that most readers would be using the New International Version of the Bible. However, since the release of the English Standard Version in 2001, many have switched to the ESV for study purposes. So with this new edition of *To the Householder*, we have decided to quote from and refer to the ESV text, which we recommend.



## » STUDY 1

# LOVE ME TRUE

[1 TIMOTHY 1:1-7]

AH, THERE'S SOMETHING STICKING out of the letterbox. Everyone loves getting letters. They make us feel wanted. We relish tearing open those gleaming white envelopes and seeing our name flash before us on a letterhead.

But after the initial pleasure of receiving it, we aren't always thrilled by what we find inside. Bills. Advertising. Junk mail. Bank statements. Final notices.

Sometimes, however, the letter is a pleasant surprise—a note from a friend, or perhaps a wedding invitation. Sometimes it's information we need about local council garbage collection or voting papers or a change of address.

Sometimes it is essential news that we really don't want to hear, such as failed exam results or that our car needs to be registered. When someone opens a letter, you can tell within seconds what it says—you only have to look at the recipient's face.

What kind of letter is 1 Timothy? Is it a friendly personal note? Is it a catalogue of various important attributes for Christians? Is it a memo from the Boss on how to run the Company? Or does it contain aspects of each of these?

To find out more about what sort of letter this is, and why Paul wrote it, let's turn to the text itself.

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### **Quickly skim 1 Timothy.**

Take careful note of the following verses: 1:1-3, 1:18-19, 3:14-4:1, 4:6, 4:11-16, 5:21-23, 6:10-14, 6:20-21.

1. What was the relationship between Paul and Timothy?

2. What threats was Timothy facing?

3. Why was Paul writing to him?

4. What does 3:14-15 tell us about how applicable this letter is to us?

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## To the householder

1 TIMOTHY IS CLEARLY A LETTER from one individual to another—from Paul to Timothy, his “true child in the faith”. It’s a letter to a colleague, to one who was part of Paul’s team of ministers, all of them involved in the work of preaching the gospel and building churches.

However, it is just as clearly not a private letter. As we read it, we see all sorts of instructions and commands about “how one ought to behave in the household of God . . . a pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). The church under Timothy’s care, which was probably in **Ephesus**, faced the difficulties and struggles that Christian churches have always faced as we wait for “the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (6:14). Chiefly, there was the battle with false teaching, which needed to be combated by godly leaders holding fast to the true gospel, but this was not the only challenge. Across all the spectrum of relationships in God’s household—men and women, slaves and masters, widows and the married, rich and poor—Paul has instructions for what is good and acceptable in God’s sight. He is training Timothy in how he ought to be conducting his ministry within God’s household.

From the opening apostolic greeting, with all its force and authority, to the closing charges in the presence of the immortal majestic God of unapproachable light, this letter is more than a private note with a tightly limited application. When Paul presents his teaching about men and women in chapter 2, it is backed by all his authority as the Apostle to the Gentiles (2:7), and is based on creation rather than local considerations.

Thus, as with all Scripture, the members of God’s household down the centuries have found 1 Timothy “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16), as Paul puts it in his second letter to Timothy.

All this may seem to be stating the obvious, but sometimes the obvious needs to be stated. The Bible was written in a concrete situation and context, but it was written for Christians in all ages and every place, as we

### Where was Timothy?

The Greek text of 1 Timothy 1:3 is a little unusual, and there is some doubt as to whether Timothy was actually in Ephesus when he received Paul’s letter. The reference to Ephesus may refer to an earlier instruction from Paul to Timothy of which we are unaware. The sense could be: “Just as I urged you (to stay in Ephesus, when I was going through Macedonia), so now you ought to remain where you are [wherever that is] so that you might charge certain persons, etc.” In the end, it would be better not to be too definite about where Timothy was when he received Paul’s letter.



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8. What is Timothy to do about this situation, and what is his aim in doing so?

PAUL URGES TIMOTHY TO TAKE strong and decisive action to silence the false teachers, and the aim of it all is love (v. 5). This is an important lesson for us. In our world, taking action to silence someone is considered the very opposite of love. These days it is almost a crime to say that there is such a thing as truth and error, let alone to insist that we are in possession of the truth, not to mention commanding our opponents to keep quiet! For the modern person, everything is open to debate, and everyone's opinion must be respected as equally valid. To quieten certain teachings because they were wrong and/or unhelpful would be considered intolerant and narrow-minded.

Yet for Paul, it is the essence of love and sincere faith. Love seeks the good of others. And since false teaching and idle religious **speculation** only leads away from God, it can never be for people's good to allow it to continue unchecked. This sort of false doctrine and speculation is no way to manage God's household. It is not "by faith"—it does not proceed from a sincere faith in the gospel, and the pure heart and good conscience that go along with that. Instead, teachers of this sort wander off into meaningless talk, especially about the law. (More on this in our next study.)

In the face of this situation, love must be tough. It must recognize that false or speculative teaching is not harmless, for it affects our lives. It ruins the good conscience we have in the gospel. It enslaves us.

### Idle speculation

In saying this, the Bible isn't suggesting that *all* debate and discussion is unhelpful. Often, we need to talk long and hard before we come to a consensus of understanding. However, such talk must not be meaningless or unfruitful or divert us from a sincere trust in God our Saviour and Christ Jesus our hope.



- 
- 2 Timothy 2:22-26
  
  - Titus 1:7-11
  
  - "True understanding comes from the heart, which leads to love, and not from the mind, which leads to controversy." Do you agree? Why/why not? (You might also look at Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:20-23, and Colossians 1:9-12.)
  
  - What do you think is the relationship between love and truth?
  
  - What dangers can you think of in applying Paul's command to silence false teachers? How might 1 Timothy 1:5 help?

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## » Give thanks and pray

- Thank God for the faithful teachers who taught you his word and brought you the good news of salvation in Christ alone.
- Ask God to give you the discernment to see false teaching for what it is, and the courage to stand up for the truth.
- Pray the same for Christians all over the world, especially those who teach God's word to others.

## » TIPS FOR LEADERS

### Studying 1 Timothy

**T**HE STUDIES IN *To the Householder*, like all of the Interactive and Topical Bible Studies from Matthias Media, are aimed to fall somewhere between a sermon and a set of unadorned discussion questions. The idea is to provide a little more direction and information than you would normally see in a set of printed Bible studies, but to maintain an emphasis on personal investigation, thought, discovery and application. We aim to give input and help, without doing all the work for the reader/studier.

Studying 1 Timothy presents its own particular problems in a small group. Because of the controversy surrounding the interpretation and application of chapter 2, it is easy for the study of the rest of the book to be derailed. Chapter 2 looms so large on the horizon that it can dominate the discussion of chapter 1 leading up to it, and make the rest of the book (chapters 3-6) seem like an anticlimax. What is more, if there are tensions and disagreements in your group over chapter 2, it may make the remaining studies difficult in terms of the group dynamics.

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In the studies leading up to and including chapter 2, we have not sought to avoid the current controversy, for it is important that we allow the Scriptures to speak on these issues of importance. It has been difficult, however, to address the controversy over women's ministry without allowing the studies to become overly complicated or technical. Many of the arguments advanced against the interpretation we offer are quite sophisticated, resting on historical or linguistic theories that it would be impossible to deal with satisfactorily in studies such as these. We have attempted to deal with *some* important objections, especially the common argument that 1 Timothy should be regarded as a set of specific commands that apply only to first-century Ephesus. However, there are a number of others (such as the meaning of particular Greek words or grammatical constructions in chapter 2), which we have worked through (and rejected) in our preparation of the studies but not included in the text.

In all of this, we have sought to maintain a balance between simply allowing the text to speak and establish its own priorities, and dealing with the issues surrounding women's ministry which concern so many churches today. As a group leader, you will need to do the same. To this end, it is important that you do at least two things:

- carefully work through the issues in your own mind, and be prepared to stand for the truth—this may be difficult, but it is the only loving course
- be sensitive in the way you handle the discussion, realizing that strong emotions are involved for many people.

Like all our studies, these are designed to work in a group on the assumption that the group members have worked through the material in advance. If this is not happening in your group it will obviously change the way you lead the study.

### **If the group is preparing ...**

If all is well, and the group is well prepared, then reading through *all* the text and answering *all* the questions will be time consuming and probably quite boring. These

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studies are not designed to work this way in a group.

The leader needs to go through the study thoroughly in advance and work out how to lead a group discussion using the text and questions as a basis. You should be able to follow the order of the study through pretty much as it is written. But you will need to work out which things you are going to omit, which you are going to glide over quite quickly, and which you are going to concentrate on and perhaps add supplementary discussion questions to.

Obviously, as with all studies, this process of selection and augmentation will be based on what your *aims* are for this study for your particular group. You need to work out where you want to get to as a main emphasis or teaching point or application point at the end. The material itself will certainly head you in a particular direction, but there will usually be various emphases you can bring out, and a variety of applications to think about.

The slabs of text need to be treated as a resource for discussion, not something to be simply read out. This will mean highlighting portions to talk about, adding supplementary discussion questions and ideas to provoke discussion where you think that would be helpful for your particular group, and so on.

The same is true for the Bible study and ‘Implications’ questions. You need to be selective, according to where you want the whole thing to go. Some questions you will want to do fairly quickly or omit altogether. Others you will want to concentrate on—because they are difficult or because they are crucial or both— and in these cases you may want to add a few questions of your own if you think it would help.

You may also need to add some probing questions of your own if your group is giving too many ‘pat’ answers, or just reproducing the ideas in the text sections without actually grappling with the biblical text for themselves.

There is room for flexibility. Some groups, for example, read the text and do the Bible study questions in advance, but save the ‘Implications’ questions for the group discussion.

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## If the group isn't preparing ...

This obviously makes the whole thing a lot harder (as with any study). Most of the above still applies. But if your group is not doing much preparation, your role is even more crucial and active. You will have to be even more careful in your selection and emphasis and supplementary questions—you will have to convey the basic content, as well as develop it in the direction of personal application. Reading through the *whole* study in the group will still be hard going. In your selection, you will probably need to read more sections of text together (selecting the important bits), and will not be able to glide over comprehension questions so easily.

If the group is not preparing, it does make it harder—not impossible, but a good reason for encouraging your group to do at least some preparation.

## Conclusion

No set of printed studies can guarantee a good group learning experience. No book can take the place of a well-prepared thoughtful leader who knows where he or she wants to take the group, and guides them gently along that path.

Our Bible studies aim to be a resource and handbook for that process. They will do a lot of the work for you. All the same, they need to be *used* not simply followed.

**Tony Payne**  
Series Editor

### Feedback on this resource

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(Phil 4:11)**

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However, the desire for more is very much the fruit of practical atheism.

Christianity, in contrast, gives rise to

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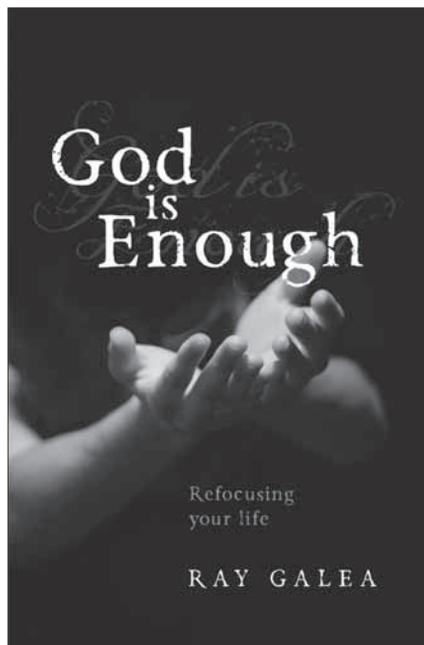
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by Ray Galea



“What are your disappointments in life? Perhaps, like me, you have unmet superficial desires—perhaps it is achieving that certain position in the company, or getting that high mark in a significant exam. Or maybe you are scarred by grief so profound that you can hardly talk about it. Or perhaps you’re not so much disappointed as unmotivated; you have allowed the good and the not so good to hijack the best, and the passionate days of your early Christian life seem so long ago. Whatever the case may be, the issue is the same for all of us: is God enough?”

With honesty and humility, Ray Galea reflects on ten psalms that have

helped him put God back in the centre of his life. Ray reminds us of the many reasons we have to join with the psalmist in saying, “Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.”

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# TO THE HOUSEHOLDER



"... I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth."

Paul's letter to Timothy is packed with instructions about the way we ought to live as God's people. Can we resist the influence of false teaching in our midst? Can we hold onto the true gospel? Can we relate properly to each other as men and women, old and young, rich and poor, slaves and free?

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