



INTRO TO 1 TIMOTHY

Part 1 of 1 Timothy

Pastor Mark Driscoll | January 04, 2004

Tonight, we're gonna start a series that'll take us about five months. And it'll take us through the letters of 1 and 2 Timothy and to do so, I'll introduce you to the principal people in the book of First Timothy. That's Paul, the author, and Timothy, this young man to whom he writes. So we'll be in the books of Acts tonight and we'll start in, actually Acts, Chapter 14 is where we're gonna kick things off. If you've got a Bible, you can go there. As we get into the book of 1 Timothy, you've gotta see the older man, Paul, and the younger man, Timothy and their relationship – and it really starts back with a life of Jesus. Jesus came, lived, died, rose, ascended back into heaven. Some people love him. Some people hated him. One of the people who, arguably, hated Jesus Christ the most in the history of the world is this guy named Paul, who's basically a terrorist, is what he is, in the early days of the early church. He takes it upon himself to get a band of thugs and go around and to murder Christians, basically what he does. He so hates Jesus that anyone who claims to worship him, he believes, should be slaughtered and put to death. The conversion of Paul, him becoming a Christian, is one of the greatest arguments for the actual resurrection of Jesus because Paul is not a guy who was going to flip teams easily, at all, but it happens in Acts, Chapter 9, where he is actually on his way out to slaughter and murder more Christians and Jesus Christ, who at this point, he has ascended back into Heaven, is apparently so frustrated at Paul that he gets off throne and comes down and makes a cameo appearance to knock him on his can, is really what he does, the Bible says.

And in that way, I kind of get the picture, like Jesus Christ is like Mohammed Ali and Paul is like Sonny Liston, just down on the mat and Jesus just really knocks him out and knocks him down. And he's blind and he's laying there on his back and Jesus says to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Good question. And Saul has a really good response. He says, "Lord?" And that's a good response. Anytime someone knocks you out, call them lord and in that moment, he realizes that Jesus really did rise from death and he's encountered the risen Jesus Christ and he gets converted; his whole life changes. He goes from being a man who murders Christians to being a pastor. You can imagine, he walks into churches and tells his story to parents whose own children he had killed. Right and the early church had a hard time believing this. This would be, basically akin to today if all of a sudden Osama bin Laden walked into Mars Hill and said, "I met Jesus. He knocked me out and now I'm a Christian. Can I join your Bible study? You're like, "I don't know," you know? "Can I lead the prayer group? Okay, everybody close your eyes. Close your eyes." "No, we're not closing our eyes. We're not closing our eyes." You know there was a real distrust about this guy, rightfully so, right, I mean, little worried about this guy and the church was like, "Yeah, we heard Paul got saved but we're not convinced, we think it's a trick."

He really did get converted and from that point forward, God calls him to go forward as a missionary and to suffer in his name. That's what he says. "You're gonna suffer in my name." So Paul goes out and he starts preaching about Jesus with boldness and courage to lots of different people that had never heard about Jesus and it's interesting, we don't have any Biblical account of Paul's physical demeanor or appearance but from history, from church history, we get the account that he's a little, Jewish guy. He's kinda bald. And if you read his letters and he said, "I'm coming." I mean, it sounds like the Hulk is coming, really. He's big and powerful and screaming and yelling and making declarations and demands – and even the Corinthians said, "Well, your letters are powerful, but you showed up and you kinda look like George Costanza, really. You're – you're just this itty bitty guy, pot belly, crooked nose, kinda bald. I mean, you know, we got junior high kids that can take you. You're not very impressive." And that's how Paul was. He was this little guy who was fearless and passionate and once he met Jesus, all of that was directed toward the truth and he's writing these huge letters and then he shows up in person and once people get a look at this guy, you know what they do? They beat him up.

Paul gets knocked down and knocked out more than anybody in the Bible. He is the glass jaw of the New Testament. That is the Apostle Paul. But he's apparently a wiry little guy because he always gets up and he always comes back and you'll see that as we study some of his journeys. He pulls into town, starts preaching, they beat him, he's shipwrecked, homeless, he says he's naked. That's a bad job, right? Any job that they strip you naked, beat you, you know – you're homeless, you're left in the open sea, you're in prison – he's in prison a lot – that's where we get a lot of his New Testament letters. You know, he would be out preaching but they threw him in prison, so he's got time to kill, so he figures he'll knock out some of the Bible while he's sitting there in chains. They guy's got a pretty crazy life and as he goes into these towns and he preaches, the most insane things happen. One of the places that he comes to is a town called Lystra. We'll look at it in Acts, Chapter 14. It's where Timothy lived. It's the beginning of their relationship.

Paul pulls in, starts to preach in Chapter 14, Verse 8. Here's what it says. "In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked." The guy was writing this as a doctor. He's emphasizing that this guy has been crippled since his birth and never walked. "He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and he began to walk." It's a great miracle. These people never heard about Jesus. Paul goes there to tell them about Jesus. There's one guy that's present that they all know. He's a guy who's been crippled from birth, never walked, doesn't have, probably, the muscular or the skeletal

ability to actually walk. There's something, you know, birth defect. There's something wrong with this poor guy. And Paul looks at him and says, "You need to be healed. Get up and go. You trust Jesus? Good. You're healed. You're all better now." God does this to authenticate Paul. This guy really speaks on God's behalf. He does a miracle.

Guy gets up, walks home. Everybody's mesmerized. Look at that. This isn't just a lecture or a sermon or _____. This guy comes with the power of God. So we look, then at how everyone responds. "When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them." They look at it – these are Greek people that were involved in Greek mythology and never heard about Jesus – they see the miracle and they say, "Hey, these are Gods. We're gonna worship them!"

There was a story that the Roman poet, Ovid, told where he said that the gods, Hermes and Zeus had come down from heaven upon one occasion. They became men and that the Greek citizens rejected them, except for one old couple that took them in and loved them and cared for them. Because of that, when a tragedy came to that town, their lives were spared and their simple little cottage was turned into a golden palace. The moral of the story is be nice to people because it might be the gods coming down to be with you.

So now, everybody knew this story and they're all like, "Well, we're not gonna blow it, man. If Zeus and Hermes shows up, we're baking scones. We're gonna take care of these guys because we want our dumpy little cottage in this rural 4H town of Lystra to get turned into something grand and grandiose. So they look at it and they say, "Well, that's – that's Zeus and Hermes and they called Paul Hermes because Hermes was the spokesman for Zeus and Paul was the one doing all the talking and they decide, you know what? We gotta go get the priest, we gotta get the ram, we gotta make a sacrifice, we're gonna worship these guys. Now you think about it. Would you be tempted to just go with it? You pull into a town, preach and everybody says, "You're God!" Yeah. _____. That could be highly profitable for a homeless guy who keeps getting beaten up and is naked all the time, all of a sudden to be a god, well – that's a promotion. He could have bling and a crib and a posse. "You know, my name was Saul, then we changed it to Paul, now I'm Hermes. Yes. Hermes." Paul's got a decision to make. Hmm, should I let them think I'm God? How many of you – this would be tempting? Quit your job, leave your cubicle and just go be a God.

And we look at it and we think, "Oh, how primitive. How silly. How superstitious. These silly people, they're gonna worship a human being. Silly." Some of us do. Some of you today were wearing shirts that said, "Farve" on the back. Well, we worship people. Some of you love an artist, love a filmmaker, whatever it is. We even have a television show, American Idol. Interesting title. It just identifies that our culture is full of idols that we worship. We worship them by dressing like them and sounding like them and emulating them and wanting to be like them. Same thing happens in Greece. They think, "Oh, Paul, Barnabas – Zeus, Hermes. We're gonna worship these people. These'll be our gods."

So here's Paul's response. Verse 14. "But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes," that's grief and mourning "and rushed out into the crowd, saying: "Men, why are you doing this? We are only men, human like you. We bring you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. In the past, he let all nations go their own way. Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from making sacrifices to them."

Paul says, "No, we're not gods, we're just guys." We are just human beings. We're not to be worshiped. We're here to tell you about Jesus. Worship him, don't worship us, but it's amazing that people are so inclined to worship other people.

You know, it's even interesting that he goes so far as to say that God has been very kind to these people, despite their ignorance and idolatry. There's a doctrine in the Bible called common grace that you find right here. The Bible says that God loves the whole world, and he does. And it says that God has a special love for his children, the same way that I love my neighbors and I love the City of Seattle but I have a particular love for my wife and children, because they're my family. Here, he says God has been loving to you, with common grace, he's given you food and joy. He – all the things that you and I enjoy in our life, James says that every good and perfect gift comes from God. Every laugh, every meal, every stop, every breath – that comes from God. And what he's saying is that you people don't understand who gave you all this joy and all this food and had the sun shine and gave you life. And that's how most of the world is. It's ignorant but spiritual and it enjoys the things that God has given. There's some inclination that we should be thankful and grateful and give homage and worship but if you don't know who Jesus is, you end up worshiping human beings and religious teachers, rather than God. And he says, you know what, the time for this ignorance has come to an end. You need to know Jesus and you need to know where your life came from.

And it's interesting too, because he uses a very interesting word to explain their religion, did you catch it? Worthless. Some of you, that's highly offensive, worthless. "Well that doesn't sound very nice." It's not. I'll tell you this, though. If you don't worship Jesus, whatever you think about God and life and life after death is worthless. That's what it is. It's not close. It's not almost there. It's not partially true. It's worthless. Now you know why they beat up Paul all the time. They beat him up. Why? Because he said that they were worshiping worthless, worthless gods. Greek mythology. Worthless. This is an important statement. In our city, you're not allowed to say that, right? I mean, some of you right now are surprised I don't have cuffs and going off to insensitivity jail. I'll tell you this – Buddhism is worthless. Islam is worthless. Judaism is worthless. Hinduism is worthless. Jesus Christ is God and you will need to recognize that everything you think about spirituality and life in God is offensive. You will need to accept that. You will either be true and thereby offend people or you will be untrue and thereby, offend God.

Those are your choices. When it comes to spiritual things, you have no choice but to be offensive. The only question is – whom do you offend? Do you offend people or God? And you have to decide. Many of you say, "Well, I believe in all religions and all paths." You don't when you go to work. You

don't believe that 405 South and I-5 North both go to Kent. You don't believe that. You live a practical hypocrisy. This goes here. This goes here. When it comes to spirituality, well it all goes there. No, it all goes there and narrow is the way that leads to everlasting life. And it's silly, too. It is worthless. It's worthless to be a Muslim because Muhammad claimed to be a sinner. Now he's in Hell. Don't follow that guy. Buddha claimed to be a sinner. Now he's in Hell. Don't follow that guy. Jesus claimed not to be a sinner – if you gotta pick one guy, pick the one guy who said he's not a sinner – and now he's in Heaven. That's the team you wanna be on. Everything else is worthless. It's silly. It's man-made. It's foolish. It's unprofitable. And in our day, it is fine that – you know, and it's so stupid, too. I mean, even in the church. I was reading the paper recently. There's a church that's having a bunch of other churches get together. They got a conference coming up this year, bringing in scholars to prove that Jesus didn't rise from the dead. Churches. You say, "Why?" Well, because they've started doing prayer services with Buddhists and Hindus and Muslims and they decided, we need to take the offensive part out of Christianity. What's the offensive part? Christ. If we just get rid of him.

I'll tell you what, God is very important for your religion. It's huge. And you're either gonna offend God or you're gonna offend people who have another idea about God. That's why in Galatians, Paul says that the truth is always an offense. That's why they murdered Jesus. That's why they murdered his followers. That's why ultimately, Paul's gonna die a brutal death. Not because they're just sort of nice people trying to help people and be spiritual but because they say that Jesus is the only God and apart from him, there is no eternal life. It's the same thing that Jesus said. They're just echoing what they were taught and what they saw. And he says, "You know what, your religion is worthless." It's worthless. This is why he gets such a strong reaction. You can imagine going to a Muslim country and standing up and saying, "Hey everybody! Muhammad's worthless." I mean, you better wear your cup, you're gonna go with that. You're gonna – you're still – you're gonna get killed. You go into a Hindu country, like Southeastern India, "Hey, everybody! Just wanted to let you know, Hinduism is worthless." That's why they beat Paul all of the time. This is exactly what happens. You'll see the beating that he takes because of this. And I'll tell you this: If you're a Christian who believes that Jesus Christ is God and you stick that, eventually, your life's gonna get a little tougher than it is right now.

"Then some Jews," Verse 19, "came from Antioch and Iconium," how far away is that? That's a hundred miles. Now, the Greeks, all of a sudden hear Paul and they're about ready to hate him. The Jews he had preached to a hundred miles away, they hate him so much, they quit their job and followed him. You know how much you hate a guy to chase him for a hundred miles with no car, no bus, no plane, no train. You're walking. "I hate that guy. I hate that guy. Where did he go?" "He left." "He left? Well, I'm gonna find him. Come on, let's go. Get a stick, get a rock. We're gonna find that guy. We're gonna kill that guy. We killed Jesus, we're gonna kill him, too. If we find any of his friends, we're gonna string them all up." A hundred miles. How many of you guys hate somebody so much that you walk to Canada to beat them? That's ambitious. I mean that's, that's pretty committed. But what you find is all of a sudden, the Jews and the Greeks, they're gonna agree. "Yeah, we need to kill Paul." The Jews and the Greeks have never agreed on anything before or since. It says in the early chapters of Acts that the Greeks, Romans and Jews all agreed to kill Jesus. That's the only thing they ever agreed on. "We hate that guy. He needs to die." They can't agree on anything.

It's amazing. If you hold up Jesus, all of a sudden, people that don't have anything in common have something in common. They're against you. Here's what happens. The Jews are following him. Then they return to, excuse me. Verse 19. "Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over." Tough, they what, Paul? "They stoned Paul," okay. This is not Fast Times at Ridgemont High, right? This is a different kind of stoning. Old Testament stoning is totally different than frat boy stoning, right? It's totally different. Frat boy stoning is – it's moon cabbage and you sit around and you have your experience that sounds like revelation to you. Biblical stoning is where they take rocks, because there's not much else there, and they chuck them at you until you die. Can you think of a worse way to go than this? Of all the ways to go, standing there while a bunch of people chuck rocks at you until you die. That's a brutal way to go. All these guys from the, the varsity team show up and they're all – you know, it's like the gun at the Mariner's games, seeing who's got the best arm. You're just sitting there, taking shots. They stone Paul. Chucking rocks at him. Some of you say, "You know I just believe we should value all perspectives and everybody should love each other and we shouldn't spank any inner children. We shouldn't – we just shouldn't, we shouldn't hurt anybody's feelings." I tell you what. Christians are the people who are very judgmental and very narrow, and so are Hindus, and so are Buddhists, and so are Muslims.

If you believe anything, you will be narrow in your thinking, because you will accept one thing and reject everything else. Here, the Greeks, they're very narrow. So narrow, that they stone Paul and the Jews they're very narrow. So narrow, that they stone Paul. It's not just Paul was the one that's zealously committed to his truth and willing to proclaim the publicly and do whatever it takes to promote it. Everyone is the same. They stone Paul. Here's what happens to our dear brother. "drug him outside the city, thinking he was dead." You know they hate you one when they won't even let your dead body stay in town, right? If you hate somebody has so much that you travel a hundred miles – that's a big deal – then you kill them – that's a big deal – and then you don't even want them in your stinking town, so you drag of them outside of your town and leave them outside of town.

"But," Verse 20, you see it coming, "after the disciples had gathered around him," we don't know if it was a miracle or if Paul just had a glass jaw and got knocked out. I got knocked out once, you ever been knocked out? I got knocked out in a football game. I was a quarterback in high school. Some guy hit me in the front and some guy hit me from the back. The next thing I know, I'm sitting on a bench on the sideline. Been blank for like, a month, just sitting there, and the coach came over, he's like, "Are you all right?" I said, "I'm fine." He said, this is not your team. You're on the wrong bench." I'm like, "Well, I'm not as fine as I thought." I didn't notice I'm on the wrong team. Yeah, my jersey's a different color. "You're not lying. That's true!" Maybe he got knocked out. I don't know. We don't know if he got knocked out or killed and healed. We don't know what happened, but here's what happened. After the disciples gathered around him, "he got up and went back into the city."

You know he took a few blows to the head to go that direction. Can you imagine that? "Golly, these people need Jesus. I better go back there and talk to them." What the? Better put a cup on, buddy, it's a bad day. He goes back into town. You gotta love this guy's zeal and his commitment, his devotion. I mean some of you guys – I mean we – half the room wouldn't suffer a paper cut for Jesus. This guy's taking rocks to the head and going

back. I mean, you almost get the impression like he's there and the disciples wave smelling salts and he comes up and ding, ding! Okay, back in the ring, you know? It just – he can't help himself. The story goes on.

"The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe." They preach the good news in that city. Didn't even take a day off. How many if you would be L&I, Workman's Comp, right. "Oh, gosh, I'm going to a massage therapist, man. I got – I got stoned. I should get, you know, I'm tapping my L&I and my Workman's Comp. I'm taking my sick leave. I'm suing." I mean, that'd be American deal. Paul got a litigator and got a book deal and got on Larry King and – I mean, he doesn't even take a day off. He doesn't complain. He doesn't go in and file a claim or nothing. He goes back and preaches, next day he's back at it. With a large number of disciples, imagine that? People join him, right? People join – would you join? Seriously, would you join? "Jesus is God!" [imitates sounds of rocks hitting someone] "Hey! Me too! Me too! Me too. Any extra rocks? I'm with Jesus." You gotta look at this. It's a little crazy, you know? People say, "Oh well, you know, people just joined Christianity because it was popular." No. No. They join it because it's true, not because it's helpful. You're gonna die.

"Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. They go about all the churches, telling their stories. "'We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,' they said." Can you imagine that? Can you imagine if you've heard, "Paul's coming and teaching Bible study." "Aw, gosh. What are gonna be on?" "Suffering." "Aw, geeze. He's gonna tell us to go get beaten up, huh?" "Yeah, he's gonna tell you go take a beating for Jesus." "Aw, man."

"Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust." Getting ready to leave town, gotta put elders in place. Elders are senior leadership, highest leaders in the church, also called pastors. We'll study them in 1 Timothy 2. It's interesting, though. Real interesting. When we get to 1 Timothy 2 and 3, you'll look at the qualifications and the reasons we have elders. Here, though, you see the elders appoint the elders. That's what we do. We don't take a vote, we don't nominate. The elders appoint the elders.

From this, Paul appoints the elders, leaves. Sometimes he's in a town for a couple weeks, like Lystra. Sometimes he's in town for a couple years. Paul is moving all over, starting churches, and it's a total mess. He comes, after his journeys, back in to this region in Acts, Chapter 16, okay? He came once, people got saved, a church got started, elders got put in place, leaves, comes back in Acts, Chapter 16. So, flip to 16. I will pick up the story. He comes back to this town of Lystra. "He came back to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek." Introduces us to Timothy, that later this series of letters will be written to.

Timothy, according to the tense in the Greek text, it seems like his dad is probably dead. So he's being raised by his mom. It tells us elsewhere he's also being raised by his grandma.

So here's a boy, being raised by a single mother. He comes from a religiously mixed, confused home. Dad's a Greek, worships all the Greek mythology. Mom is some sort of jacked Jew, worshiping whatever it is she's into. How many of you came from a really confused home? "My mom's a Buddhist, my dad's a Baptist and I'm in therapy." You know, this is a confused home. They have different gods, theologies, worldviews. You don't want to be in a marriage like this. If you love Jesus, marry somebody who loves Jesus. Don't confuse your kids by getting involved in all kinds of the other religions and a lot of people don't think about that, they think, "Well we could work it out," well when you get the kids, I'm telling you, it's going to get 15 times more complicated.

It's complicated for Timothy. He's an unmixed, confused to spiritual mess of a household but it does say that he got converted. He probably got converted in Acts 14, when Paul was there. He's a young guy, hears Paul preach, gets saved. By Acts 16, he's been a Christian for a little while and he's grown to be this very godly man. Verse 2, it says, "The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him." The church that was there – all went there and said, "Okay, who's your best young man?" they all said, "Timothy. Hands down, Timothy is a great guy. He's young, he's zealous, he's bright, he's smart, he's faithful, he's trustworthy. This guy, he's the best guy." I'll say this – many of you young men and young women aspire to ministry in leadership. The first and most important thing is too, like Timothy, build a reputation. Strength and courage and trustworthiness and faithfulness – so oftentimes, people that don't have a great reputation want to go into ministry and they shouldn't. You'll see that one of the qualifications for leader in the church is that they would be respectable. Timothy here is a very respectable guy. For you young man, I would say in particular – look at the life of Timothy. Great guy. Everybody in the church knows he's a great guy, and I tell you right now, if you got the elders and deacons and members of the church together and said, "Okay, who are the best young men?" We know who they are. They're self evident. They rise to the top. Just can tell that their lives have God's hand upon them. Timothy's that guy.

You know, you wanna be that man or woman that, was in the church, everybody knows, "Oh, they love the Lord. They're great people." The church who really loves this young man and this young man really loves Jesus. So here's what Paul wants to do with him in Verse 3. "Paul wanted to take him along on the journey," Paul says, "Well, I'll take Timothy with me." And it's interesting, isn't it? He wants Timothy to become a pastor and go into full-time ministry. What he doesn't say is, "Great! Let's send him off to bible college, four years, seminary, two years, a third year he'll knock out his M.Div. after his M.A. Then we'll get him ordained by the denomination and then in six or seven years, he could go do ministry." What does he say? "I'll take him with me. I'll take him with me." I'm not against seminary and I'm not against bible college, okay? I'm almost done with a Master's degree in exegetical theology through an honors program at a seminary. Good school that I enjoy. I've learned a lot. It's been highly profitable, but I've been going to school, while I've been your pastor because some people have a propensity to go off in an isolated environment, do really well on their exams, translate back into ministry, and stink with people. You can be somebody that scores perfectly and all your exams and if you don't know how to love people, encourage people, walk with people, teach people, rebuke people as they need, you're not going to be much good for the Kingdom, in the local church as a pastor. And what you see is that, what has happened in American Christianity is – it's a very strong indication of our sickness. Most

churches only call the trained. So, if you want to go into ministry, you need to go get trained somewhere and then they call you to work at their church.

The situation in the New Testament is completely different. The train the called. They wait for God's hand on somebody, they rise up, they see that they're gifted. God's called them and then the leaders train them. That's what they see here. It's obvious that God has called Timothy. He's an amazing guy, and so Paul, then, trains him in a relationship that is much like the one that Jesus had with his own disciples. Dinner, friendship, love, mentoring, investment, relationship. And this is so incredibly important because this is how the church, historically, has produced the best leaders. Right now, three and-a-half thousand churches will close and die in this country. I can just about graph for you your level of theological education and the size of your church. The longer you go to school, the smaller church you will have. Why? Because school isn't church, and the best place to study is while you're doing ministry in the church so that you get the practical and the theoretical put together. If some of you feel called into ministry, you test it in the church by seeing if the other leaders recognize you as someone who's worth investing in, by being faithful and having character like Timothy and then having good leaders come along side and walk with you. And if you can take classes and study, that's all great, but it shouldn't be that or serving in the ministry. It should be both and studying while you serve.

Timothy's this great guy. Paul adopts him and from this point forward – these guys are together for 15 years. They write books of the bible together. They're inseparable. This is like Batman and Robin – the boy wonder through the New Testament. Paul can trust Timothy with money and leadership and heretics and nutjobs and weirdos and messes and he can move on and he can drop Timothy in and Timothy is faithful to untangle problems that have arisen. And what does Paul call Timothy? You guys remember the title he gives him on three occasions? My son. And the way you fathers feel about your son is the way Paul felt about Timothy and the way you sons feel about your godly fathers, that's the way that Timothy felt about Paul.

This is the best and healthiest way for leaders to get developed. I'm absolutely convinced of it. It's interesting, though. They're gonna go preach the gospel and do ministry among Jews so Paul has to do something to Timothy, who's a Greek to enable him to have access into the Jewish community. Here it is. You guys'll be so glad this isn't part of our intern program. In the middle of Verse 3, "so he circumcised him," wow! That's commitment. He circumcised him. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine, young men, if you came to me and said, "I feel called to be an elder. I want you to mentor me." "Okay, great. Here's what you're gonna do. You're gonna work with me. Not gonna pay you anything. You're gonna be homeless. You gotta get beaten a lot. If you have a helmet, bring it, because you're gonna need it. They throw rocks. Okay? And there's no medical, no dental, no retirement." "Well, what do I need to do to qualify." "Drop your pants. I'm gonna circumcise you." How many of you guys would be like, "I prayed about it. I feel like the Lord's calling me to be a plumber." In Jesus' name. Amen.

How many of you guys, that would be it, right there. If at bible college, first day all the freshmen show up with their backpack. "Drop your pants." "Ho, no you don't. I'm," circumcise, now that's a – that's a big deal. Golly! Timothy – he's pretty committed to this, really. Some of you guys are like, "I'll go to Bible study." Circumcision. That's a big deal. How many of you guys, right now, this is your greatest fear. It's not drowning or animal mauling or a shotgun accident on a hunting trip. It's me circumcising you. That's your biggest fear. Paul circumcises this guy "because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek." They knew, this is a Greek kid. He can't come in and preach the gospel to us Jews. Why, he's not circumcised. He has to be circumcised. There's a rule. In the same way, some of you ladies, perhaps. If you felt called to go do ministry to Muslim women. You would need to wear a head covering. Why? Well, that's the cultural rules and for those people to even let you in to listen, you need to play by the cultural rules to get access to tell them about Jesus so that then their culture can be transformed from the inside out. Here, to get to Jews, you gotta be circumcised. So he circumcises Timothy. It's interesting. He doesn't circumcise Titus because it's not necessary. He's working with Greeks.

"As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey." That's from earlier in the book. "So the churches were strengthened in the faith and numbering grew." There's Timothy. Two things, I'll tell you. Be really important for those of you that are young leaders, emerging leaders. You people that feel that God's hand is on you to learn from the life of Timothy. The first is be willing to be the number two guy. Everybody reads the Bible says, "I wanna be Paul." Not really. There are so few Pauls. Paul's a number one guy. He can blow into a town, preach, lead people to Christ, plant a church, raise money, appoint elders, fight with the heretics, straighten everything out. Boom. There are very few Pauls. There are so few Pauls but there's room for a ton of Timothys. People who could teach Bible studies, lead, train elders, unpack messes, organize churches, help people grow to maturity.

We're part of a church planting network. This church was planted in the same way that Paul planted these churches. God called me to Seattle. I started preaching and teaching. I do, in large part, what Paul does. I preach. I teach. I lead. I develop leaders. I help plant other churches. I write books. I kinda do that. The strength and the health of Mars Hill is completely built on the enormous army of Timothys. Men and women in this church that are faithful. You don't get to see them on the stage because their ministry's not primarily pulpit. The pulpit is the most visible ministry but it's the air war. Where everything really gets done is the ground war. And if you feel called to ministry, you feel called to leadership, know this – that very few Paul's exist.

For example, in our church planting ministry, we've seen nationally, upwards of 80 percent of church planters fail. Eighty percent. Why? Usually because the number two guy goes out and tries to be a number one guy. Timothy tries to be Paul and it just doesn't work. This year, we'll get 2,000 people who inquire about planting a church. We'll get 200 that apply and we assess. And we'll get 20 or 30 that successfully plant. One percent. One percent of all the young men and women who believe they can do what Paul did, one percent actually can. I'll tell you this, though. There will be people that come out of this church that are a Paul and we will raise them up and we will ship them out and they'll go start new churches, just like Paul did. We're all about church planting, but the majority, the majority is gonna be Timothy. The faithful, hardworking, slugging it out, dependable, in the trenches, in the problems, in people's lives, sorting out the mess.

When we started this church, I did a lot of that. I don't anymore. As it grows, I do a lot more what Paul did. Raising money. Preaching, teaching, casting

vision, writing, church planting, developing leaders. For those of you that aspire to be a young leader, look at Timothy's life and be willing to be a number two. Paul tells us in Romans not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought but to assess ourselves with the sober judgment in accordance with the measure of faith that God has given us. "Can I do this or really am I Timothy? And I need to come alongside and be a faithful, hardworking, dependable, necessary part of this team?" Okay, and this is important because sometimes it's just pride that wants us to be someone that we're not. And sometimes, if we are more than we anticipate, it's cowardice that causes us to not arrive at that place that we're fully capable of.

First lesson from Timothy. Be willing – be willing – to be the number two. The second – work on your reputation. Work on your reputation. Those people who are faithful and humble and dependable are gold, and they easily are identified. They don't need to brag or boast. They don't need to make trouble or noise, they just rise. It says in 1 Peter, Chapter 5 that God opposes the proud and he gives grace to the humble. So humble yourselves before God, and he'll lift you up in due time. Then he says, "Young men, in the same way, clothe yourselves with humility." Says, you know what, you wanna lead in the church? Humility. Let God raise you up. Let God raise you up. Humility – and be willing if God calls you – to be the number two. Important lessons from Timothy.

He joins up with Paul here in Acts 16, they go on together like a father and son, 15 years together, slugging it out for the Kingdom. If you jump all the way up to Acts, Chapter 20, something very interesting happens. They've been on a number of missions and journeys together; lots of preaching and teaching. They planted a church in a town called Ephesus. There's a letter in the new testament to the church at Ephesus. It's mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3. It's one of the churches that is mentioned there by John. Paul has got this church going. It's a healthy church, and it's going pretty well. He decides that God has called him elsewhere and so what he does, he gets the elders of the church together and he gives them his fond farewell. "I'm leaving." He's gone.

Lot of responsibility now falls on everyone else in the church. He says in Chapter 20, Verse 22, "' And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there.' Isn't that interesting? Paul says, "I'm going to Jerusalem." "What's there?" "I have no idea. I just know that God says, 'Go.'" Sometimes that's how God works. God doesn't say anything except for, "Just go there." Okay. "I'll show you the rest when you get there." For me, this is one of the most amazing things about Paul. I can't imagine planting this church and then leaving it. Some of you hope that happens, you know. "Please, Lord God, send him elsewhere." But for me I planted the church with the intention of being here for a lifetime. I plan on being here 'til I die, young or old, dying here. That's what I plan on doing.

Paul, though, has this extraordinary call where he leads people to Christ, loves them, forms the church, just as it's getting healthy and it's enjoyable and people are getting married in babies are getting born and the action kicks in – he leaves. I mean, can you imagine that? Can you imagine finally, it's coming together and you're out and he's gonna go start all over and get beaten and stoned and hammered and hated and do it again. He says, "I only know," Verse 23, "that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me." I don't know what's gonna happen. I know they're gonna beat me and throw me in jail. And that's pretty much a given. Everything else is a question mark. "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race, complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace." This is why you gotta love Paul. "They're gonna beat me. They're gonna try and kill me. They're gonna throw me in jail. It's gonna be hard. I don't know what's gonna happen." "Well how do you feel about that, Paul?" "Great. I have one goal and that's to point to Jesus. See I don't really care what happens to me. As long as I got my finger up, I'm a winner. I've done my job."

Don't complicate your life. Your life is real simple. It's about testifying about Jesus. You have one goal, raise up Christ so that, what? He can draw men unto himself. That's our goal – Jesus. He says, "I testify to the gospel. Jesus is God. Born of a virgin. Lived without sin. Died. Rose. Conquered sin and death. Salvation is through him alone." He says, "You know what? That's what I'm about." But Paul, what about the persecution, the hardship? What about the famine, the plague, the stoning, the beatings? You don't have a 401K. You don't have dental and they knocked all your teeth out. What about," he says, "You know what I care about. I care about Jesus, that's what I care about. That's what I care about." And he says this, "I just want to be faithful." He says, "God created me to point to him and I just want to go to the end. I don't wanna pull up lame half-way there." Right, some people do that. They get going with Christ and, "Ooh, it's hard. Yeah. I'm out." Out of the race. Paul says no. I wanna run strong and hard, right to the finish line, no retirement. I wanna serve Jesus until I see him. I want to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And I really care nothing about my life.

Sometimes it's so easy to overcomplicate your life. Your life is about testifying about Jesus. You say, "Well I'm suffering." Great, because this is an opportunity to testify about Jesus. Your attitude reflects a lot about your faith when it's being tried. "But people hate me." Well, this is great. And I'll have an opportunity to testify about Jesus. Whatever you're going through, if your goal is to testify about Jesus, you can always be successful. If your goal is anything other than that, you will find yourself disappointed because he didn't meet your goal. My goal was to get rich. I didn't make it. My goal was to get married. And didn't make it. Doh! You know, my goal was to – whatever. If your goal is, "I wanna testify about Jesus," you can, like Paul, say "It's going real well," even when it's going real poor. That's why we love Paul so much. There's nobody like this guy.

"Now I know," he says, Verse 25, "I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again." He says, "I'm outta here. I'm going to die somewhere and I'll see you in Heaven. Can you imagine this, hugging your pastor, "Goodbye!" "See you in Heaven." [whistles] Some of you say, "Oh, that'd be so great." "It's not gonna happen but it happened here in Ephesus. They had to wave goodbye to Paul. It's a big deal. "Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole counsel of God." He said, "You know what? I've done my job here. I taught you the Bible." You know, this is amazing to me. Even in the church today, there's not a lot of Bible teaching. There's not.

You know one of the things I love the most about this church? I am very long-winded. I mean, if this is your first time, we'll have breakfast together in a little bit. I go for a while. Do you know that I have not gotten a complaint about the length of the sermon that I can remember in the history of this

church? Some of you will e-mail me tomorrow, just to kill that run I've had. At this church, we take a lot of time to go through the Bible together. We go through books of the bible because we believe Paul's words are true that we need to go through the whole counsel of God's word. It shouldn't be 15 minutes on pat doctrines and topics and whatever I'm feeling into that week. There's a lot of things in the Bible that, quite frankly, I wouldn't talk about, like circumcision. Kinda freaks me out, makes me feel weird. I tend not to have public conversations about circumcision. "So, are you circumcised? Do you know," I mean that's just not, that's not what I do, but it's in there, so we talk about it. You know, a little bit later in 1 Timothy, we're gonna talk about women in ministry. We're going to talk, ladies, about your hemlines and your belly shirts and your push-up bras. Not something I would normally get into. Thong underwear – not, not, not something that I would just, you know, we're gonna do a seminar. I open up for Tony Robbins. He tells you how to be happy and excited and successful and I'm gonna yell at you about your underwear.

I mean, it is not what I would choose to talk about but it's in there, so we have to talk about it. And the whole counsel of God means Old Testament, New Testament, all the genres of literature. Get into everything that's in there go right through it, deal with it as it is because you're either going to offend men or God and if you skip parts of whole counsel, you're offending God. It's so important that you, as a congregation, continually uphold the love for the Scriptures and the receptivity to be taught. Paul says, "I've done my job. I taught the Bible. I taught the Bible." Someday I should just put together all the emails I get from pastors all around the country. Sometimes we have 7,000 people a week download the sermon off our website. I get a stack of emails, continually, from pastors, continually telling me, "You're so lucky. You get to teach the Bible and people listen and if you go an hour, they stay." Those are the saddest emails. So I get to preach the, get to teach the Bi- they're Christians. They're Christians. What Christian doesn't like to learn the Bible? But that's where it's at. Paul says, "My hands are clear. I've done my job. I taught everybody the Bible. Even the hard parts that people got really bent out of shape about."

I wanna say thank you for being a congregation that actually listens and likes to study the Bible. I don't say that to flatter you – I'm not that nice – but I say that, really, because it's true. It truly is true. People always get up and leave. Actually, it's kind of exciting for me. It means they're paying attention. But, but the whole counsel's important and don't just get off on some pet doctrine or your own author or your own little thing – whole counsel. He gives them a warning, though. It's interesting what he has to say. He tells the elders, Verse 28, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers." Who selected the elders? The Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit selects the elders in the church. "Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." Here's the deal. Jesus died for Mars Hill. Do you know that? Jesus died for Mars Hill. He says I will build my church. He built this church. We've grown 60 percent a year since year one. A lot of you have gotten saved in this church or through this church. Hebrews 3:1 says he's the Apostle. He planted his church. 1 Peter 5 says he's the chief shepherd, he's the senior pastor at this church, in Matthew, he makes a promise, "I'll build my church." How's he do that? He died for you. He died for your sin. He died for this church. It's a valuable thing.

This year, we're gonna spend over a million and-a-half dollars. We meet in a five, six million dollar building. We have thousands of people that call it home. They're all building their life and family and budget and schedule and eternity on the teaching of the Bible. This really matters. Some people are so indifferent. "I'm going to church." No! This is what Jesus died for. This is incredibly important. The reason that Paul and Timothy give their whole life to the church is because Jesus gave his life for the church. I'm giving you guys my whole life because Jesus gave us his whole life. And he tells the elders, you'd better protect this. This is a beautiful, wondrous thing. This is a church. This is a miracle. These are people that God loves. These are people that God dwells in. These are people that Jesus Christ got out of the grave so that he could embrace. You better keep an eye on them. You better love them. You better pay attention. You better do your job, because I'm out of here and it's on you. I've done my job. I taught the Bible. You know what you need to know, now you need to do what you need to do.

Guys, we're a total miracle. This church was planted when I was 25. I'd never been a pastor. You know, right now, we don't have anybody who's an elder that has a degree in what they're doing. We have blown all projections. We're a total miracle. It's nuts. It doesn't make any sense at all. Unless you put into the equation, this variable. The tomb was empty. You put that variable into the equation. You say, "Well, of course." Jesus is alive. This is what happens. Thousands of people get saved and their lives get changed. Why? The tomb was empty. He says, you know what? Jesus Christ died for these people. He rose for these people. He loves these people. Take care of these people. You know, one of my most frightening verses in all the Bible is in Hebrews where it says that I serve as a man who must give an account for you. I mean, I'm popping Zantac like Pez just trying to meditate on that verse, giving me a total ulcer. You guys matter to God. You guys matter enough to God that he became a man and died in your place. God loves you very dearly and has given himself to you fully. And what we have as a people is a miracle of God to be a church that gets to study the Bible and love our brothers and love our God and love our neighbors and Paul tells the elders, this is a precious, precious thing. Be on guard. You'll hear what he says.

Verse 29. "I know that after I leave," it's a promise. Jesus promised that wolves would come. Paul promises it as well "I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock." Paul says, I'm leaving but the heretics are coming. The false teachers. Here's what they're gonna do. "Even from," where? "your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you day and night with tears." Mars Hill has grown at 60 percent a year since year one. Mars Hill has grown from an idea when I was 25 years of age to the fastest-growing church in the history of the least-churched city in the United States of America. Our budget, year one, I think we brought in \$90,000.00. This last year, you guys gave almost \$1.5 million. We made budget. Thank you. We have gone from my living room to this \$5 or \$6 million building. Things are going exceedingly well. We have been privileged to be part of a church planting movement that has successfully started over 100 churches in 8 nations in less than 4 years with a zero percent failure rate. There is a stack of books that have been written on us. The amount of media coverage is ridiculous. We're a total miracle. By God's grace, we're a healthy church. I'm proud to be your pastor. I enjoy it here. I couldn't be happier.

But where is our greatest point of vulnerability? It's you. It's you and you. That's where we're vulnerable. "[M]en will arise" he says, from where? "your own number." Members of the church. People sitting in the pew. Community groups leaders.

Working in the nursery. Musicians on the worship team. The ushers. The greeters. The people who bake for special events. The people who volunteer in the office. Just like Judas Iscariot, it's those people that are closest that have the propensity to kill all that God has created. I want you, as a church – I want you to feel that weight. I want you to feel that. Our biggest threat is not liberal Seattle. It is not homosexuality. It's us. It's you and you and me. That's it. You know what, right now there's people all around this church that don't believe in a thing that we believe in and you're not gonna listen to them, follow them or deny Christ because you don't have any relationship with those people. The people you are most likely to be led astray by are friends. The people you go on vacation with. The people who you have dinner with. The people in your community group. The people that your family goes out to enjoy fellowship with. The people who your kids play with their kids. Those are the most dangerous people.

You say, "So what, do we have no fellowship?" No, we have to have fellowship. We have to teach people the whole counsel of God so that if one of us should turn into a wolf and start to drag people – or attempt to drag people out of the church – then those people that are closest to them can say no. You either repent or you leave and sometimes it's like Jesus told Judas Iscariot, "You're gonna do it. Why don't you just go do it and get it over with." And Judas hung himself and people who are heretics hang themselves. We live in a day, however, when there is no such thing as a heretic. You'll see it when we get into Timothy. He talks about false teachers and liars and heretics and false doctrine. We do not live in a day that even accepts that there is such a thing as proper and improper doctrine. It's a terrifying day for the church.

You young men are the most likely to screw up what we're doing. You guys that download articles from stupid websites and all of a sudden figure out that you've got the whole thing wired. You guys that read one book and are ready to go die over nothing. You guys who, all of a sudden feel that because you've learned four Greek words you're ready to be the pope and have us kiss your ring. There is something in young men that just compels them toward arrogance and toward divisiveness. It's like – it happens all the time it's just – it's like bulls in rutting season. Timothy's not that guy. Timothy is a faithful guy. He could tell the difference between guys like Paul and wolves and he loves guys like Paul and he fights against wolves. Some of you guys are gonna study deeply – and you should, I'm not discouraging study – I, after my conversion for the first ten years, I read almost a book a day. Today, I still read almost – about a hundred pages a day. Every night. I read. I love to read. I love theology. One of the reasons I study so much is because you guys get into the weirdest things and you have the most peculiar questions and I keep running down all your rabbit trails trying to sort out your mess. And I'm not saying don't study but what I'm saying is this – when you get down some stupid rabbit trail or you take your Calvinism off into retard land or you take your charismatic theology off into charismatism, you know what, you're just – at some point, you gotta learn to hit the brakes. Otherwise, you end up, "Hey, look at me, I'm with Judas! What the," you gotta hit the brakes at some point. And what Paul says is this: It's about the church, Jesus and the gospel. That Jesus died for these people. That's the heart and soul of what we're about. Jesus and people. That's what we're about. When you get off into all your stupidity, what you end up doing is the same things that the heretics do and that's this: The heretics wait for the gospel to get people together and then they come in and pull them out to lead them astray.

"Oh, come to my little Bible study. Come over to my house for dinner. I wanna talk about this. Have you read this? Have you thought about this?" Oh, you know, I don't know if we should go to that church. I don't know if there's any good church. You know what, I'll start a church. Here's some Kool-Aid, white shoes. There you go." This is the same problem that our dear brother Billy Graham has had in the history of his ministry. Godly man; if you wanna argue about Billy Graham, just go stand in the Blair Witch corner of Hell. He's a great guy. Billy Graham goes in, he preaches Jesus, people become Christians and you know what? Cults and weirdoes and nutjobs and oddballs and freaks and wolves. They come in after him. They go door to door trying to take all those people. That's what heretics do. They let Christians do the work and then they come in and steal the people, get them off on some stupid, stupid doctrine, doesn't mean nothing. Doesn't go anywhere. It's so far off of Christ that it just gets looney- it just – it's so frustrating. And you think about it in the church today.

When we get into 1 Timothy, you know, we're gonna have to get into some hairy stuff. But you think about it – we got the Catholic church covering up pastors who are molesting children. That's a wolf, not a shepherd. We have the Episcopal church who takes a guy that left his wife and kids to run off with his gay lover and we make him a Bishop. That's a wolf. That's a wolf. It's insane. It's completely untethered to reality in Scripture. T.D. Jakes has got a church of about 20,000 or something in Dallas. Time Magazine said that he's the next Billy Graham. You know who the next Billy Graham is? Nobody. Just Billy. Everybody else, junior varsity. T.D. Jakes doesn't believe in the trinity. How can he be the next Billy Graham when you don't know who God is? Everybody's like, "Oh, he's so successful." Well, in addition to fruit, we wanna see truth. It's nuts. It's totally insane. Nobody's willing to play referee and say, "That's a foul. That's a foul. That's a foul." It's this sort of pluralistic mush where it's like, "Well, that's their opinion and that's their opinion and that's their opinion." Yeah, but what's God's verdict on this? Does God say anything? We live in an insane day where doctrine is just thrown to the side. People don't care about much of anything. It's been a problem in the history of this church. It comes in waves and seasons. It seems like particularly with young men, they get off on something stupid and they run together like a pack of dogs. You gotta just, you know, go hunting.

It started way back, early on in this church. I was young. I was insecure. I was overwhelmed. Like Timothy. Stressed out. Paul tells Timothy, "Have a drink. Calm that ulcer." That verse makes total sense. We're starting the church. We got a handful of people. I'm thinking, "I hope, I hope God's in this because this is, you know, we don't have much to work with." Some guy shows up, older guy, seasoned, experienced, degree, da, da, da, da, da, da, da. Says, "You know what, I'll be Paul. You be Timothy, I'll mentor you. You need love and help and support and friendship." Okay. Sounds good. I'm scared. I could use help. Guy starts pushing all this weird doctrine. Pushing issues, Pushing that, saying, "You know what, Bible doesn't teach that. Bible doesn't teach that. Bible doesn't teach that. Whole time, I tell my wife, I say, "Honey. I don't know if this guy's a shepherd and I'm supposed to – maybe I'm just young and arrogant and not teachable, or maybe he's a wolf. I don't know. I don't like where he's going." So we prayed and we fasted and I had a prophetic dream. Went to bed, sleeping, had a dream it was opening night of the church. And that I was standing in the back of the church in the foyer and I was holding a Bible and I turned around and he walked in the door. He was wearing a macramé, like a homemade cross and a shirt and sandals, _____ sandals and shorts and carrying a Bible in a leather cover and I remember his look on his face, it just looked evil. And he came up to me

and he basically said, "You've got this church going. You're not ready to handle it. You need to quit. I'm gonna be the pastor. The only reason I've been hanging out with you is so that you could get the church together and then I'll take it." And I remember in my dream, God gave me Acts Chapter 20, this text we look at tonight and 1 Peter 5. 1 Peter 5, he said, "Shepherd the flock that I have given you." And in Acts Chapter 20, he said, "Men will arise from your own number, distort the truth and lead many astray. So be on guard." When I woke up, heard from God. Every time God gives me a prophetic dream, he gives me Scripture to go with it. I woke my wife up and I said, "Honey, God spoke to me. That guy's a wolf, not a shepherd. I'm supposed to pastor this church and Satan sent him in. He's Judas." I told the guys on my elder team and my church planting mentor. Didn't tell anybody else.

It was opening night at the church. I am blitzo. I'm gone. I'm just "Ahggghh." You know, it's like your wedding day. You just sit there, glossy-eyed like, "I don't know." You don't remember any of it. It's just this big, huge day. I'm sitting there in a pew with my lovely wife. She says, "Honey, I forgot my Bible." "Okay, I'll go get it." I get up. I go out to the foyer. I pick up her Bible, I turn around, "Doh! There's that guy!" What – I'm all by myself. I'm standing where I was in my dream. I'm holding the Bible. He walks in wearing the cross, the shirt, the sandals, the shorts, the Bible. He's got the look on his face. I was thinking, "Oh, you're kidding." He comes up to me, word for word, says exactly what he said in my dream. "I'm Paul. You're Timothy. You can't handle this. I'm here to take over. Thanks for getting the church started." I said "I'm Timothy, you're Judas. Get the hell out! Get the hell out of my church! You're Judas Iscariot and you've gotta go now." He says, "Oh, come on." "No, come on," literally. I kicked this guy out of the church. "God told me you were coming. God told me you're a wolf, not a shepherd. The only reason you've been a friend to me is because I'm an insecure young guy, and you want me to get people together so that you could take my church? No, there's the door." Kicked this guy out. Walked down the aisle. Preached the first sermon. Launched Mars Hill.

Many of you are new to this church. Many of you don't know what you believe. Many of you are not connected. Many of you are easy pickings. I worry greatly about you. You need to read your Bible. It's a great time. January. Start reading. Get in a class. Wednesday night. Capstone. Get in a community group. Get in a Bible study. Learn. Read. Study. Grow. Why? Because there are false teachers everywhere and their goal is to come and just pick you off and confuse you and lead you astray – distort the truth – make a whole mess of this great thing that God's done and you're the most vulnerable point in the church. And we don't want you to be that way. We teach the Bible. We preach the Bible. We try everything we can. If you haven't taken the gospel class, take the gospel class. It's introduction to theology. We all gotta be on the same page. It's Wednesday nights. If you haven't been to it, start there and we'll plug you in.

It matters so greatly your doctrine, your theology, what you believe that you have things straight. I can't overemphasize that. That's what we want to commission you to as a church. I wanna commission you to a year of intense study. I wanna commission us as we get into Timothy to sound doctrine, defending ourselves against heretics so that we could stick to Jesus and lift him up so that we could continue to be a healthy people. Some of you are given time, energy, money, your whole life to this thing. Jesus Christ has given his whole life to this thing. It's incredibly important. It does matter. I'm gonna call you to communion, which is remembering Jesus' body and blood, shed for your sin. Christians are welcome to partake. I'm gonna call you to give your tithes and offerings. I'm gonna call you to sing and worship Jesus as God and I'm gonna call you to go from here and read your Bible and develop your doctrine and get connected in this church in a group or a class where you can learn and grow. So that you're able to be like Timothy and Paul and stand there and say, "I teach sound doctrine and I refute error and I can tell the difference between a wolf and a shepherd. And I'll pray for our health.

Father God, thank you for a good time with our people. God I thank you that in the history of this church, you have protected us from a multitude of false teachers that have walked in the door and thought, "Well these people are young and that pastor's young. This shouldn't be too hard." God, we're young but we're still filled with your spirit. We have the same Bible as everyone else. I pray you fill us with courage like you did Timothy and wisdom. I pray, God that we would always be about the Lord Jesus Christ and testifying to his gospel and following in the example of Paul. I pray you keep us from getting off on our stupid doctrines and our, our idiotic nothings that we could just boast about and distinguish ourselves and quote Greek words so everybody else thinks we're smarter than they are. I pray you keep us, God to be a diligent church in study that is theologically rigorous and sound but has a spirit of humility and service that cares about people and not just ideas and wants to see people's lives changed and not just their arguments lost. God, please increase our number. Please give us a year that we grow at least at 60 percent, like we have every year since we began. And God, please keep our nose in the book and our knees on the floor and our hands in the air. In Jesus' good name, amen.