

# The Gospel-Shaped Life

Unedited Transcript

*1 Timothy 1:1-11*

Good morning! It is great to be with you, guys. I have had an eventful week culminated with, of course, watching the NFL Draft last night. How many of you watched the NFL Draft? All three of you that care. That's awesome. Yeah, the NFL Draft was an interesting night to watch. Believe it or not, it relates to what we're going to talk about today. We're going to look at 1 Timothy and we're going to look at this idea of a Gospel-shaped life.

The first thing I want you to notice is in your handout, there's a hyphen. The hyphen is between the word "Gospel" and the word "shaped". I want you take your handout and I want you to X-out the hyphen. Let me tell you why. Because we're going to talk about the Gospel-shaped life this morning, we're not going to talk about a life that is shaped like the Gospel. We're going to talk about a life that is shaped by the Gospel. There's a difference and here's the difference.

I was driving. I had a long drive yesterday back from Jacksonville and I'm listening to the Predators Coach, the local arena football league team coach. He's talking on ESPN radio and he and Scott Anez, the local ESPN radio personality, they're talking about different players in the draft. I wish I could remember his name because a very profound statement he made was, "These guys like what comes with being a football player but I'm not really sure that he likes being a football player." What an interesting catch for a guy to make. This guy likes what comes with being a player not necessarily being a player. This guy likes what comes with playing the game. He doesn't necessarily love the game.

Then the interesting thing was I was actually watching part of the draft last night and I'm listening to these guys on ESPN on TV and they talked about a guy. I don't remember which guy it was but he was big. He was like 6'7, 330 lbs. I'm like, "You don't really need to like anything when you're that big." Right? You just do what you want to do. They said, "We're not really sure how committed he is to the game of football. He played baseball and he did this thing and he did that thing. We're not really sure how committed he is to the game of football."

I realized that as we're looking at 1 Timothy and we're looking at what Paul says to Timothy in his book, that's a little bit about what Paul is telling Timothy. Let's go ahead and look at it. We're going to look at 1 Timothy, the first eleven verses of the first chapter and here's our outline for today. We're talking about Gospel-shaped life. I left the hyphen in. I think, PowerPoint did that to me so the Gospel-shaped life.

## **Letter to a Protégé**

The first thing we're going to talk about is what is 1 Timothy? It's really a letter to a protégé. Then we're going to talk about the false Gospel versus the real Gospel that Paul is cautioning Timothy about in the Church of Ephesus. Finally, we're going to talk about what are the fruit of your beliefs. What are the fruit of your beliefs?

Let's talk a little bit about the background here of 1 Timothy. I think, sometimes we read these books and we've seen them so much. How many of you have been in church for more than ten years? Yeah, a

lot of hands go up. I don't know about you but, for me, when I read these books, I get complacent about their history, their context. My son now is in college at Northwestern Pennsylvania Grove City College. It's a great college. He's a Wolverine. He is taking a New Testament Class.

I said, "How's the New Testament class going?" He said, "It's really hard because my familiarity is making me complacent about really knowing it. There's kids that have just come to school here. They're either brand new Christians or they're maybe not even Christians at all and so this is their first intense run through the Bible and they can remember everything because it's fresh for them but for me ..." He's like, "Dad, I grew up in the church. I've heard all the stuff so many times before. I can't remember what's where because I just heard it so much before." I think, that's a challenge for guys that have been in the church for a while is you just think, "I've heard all this before."

Let me remind you a little about what this is. There's three epistles, three letters from Paul that are called the Pastoral Epistles. They are 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. They are letters to pastors that's why they're called Pastoral Epistles. They are written by Paul to his protégés, Timothy and Titus were young men, at one point, young men that Paul had brought up in the faith, had trained to be pastors. Then in these different places where he planted churches, he had left Timothy and Titus to be maybe the pastor. We're not sure. He could just have been an elder or a senior adviser in the church, a Bishop maybe over a number of different churches.

Paul wrote this book towards the end of his life. Now, the interesting thing about a pastoral epistle versus Romans through Philippians or Thessalonians is that those books often or those letters often were very theological in their basis, Romans especially. You can get lost in three sentences at Romans, right? These books were more a practical letter to a pastor like, "Hey, as you're pastoring this church, these are the things to look for." They're very practical. They're not super theological which actually in some ways makes them a little bit interesting in a different way.

When Paul writes this book, he's just probably just gotten out of prison in Rome. If you read the end of Acts ... If you want to read the humdinger of an adventure story, read the last four or five chapters of Acts and you can see Paul's journey to Rome and all these people are trying to kill him. He gets out of probably what we think is a two-year imprisonment in Rome and he writes this letter to Timothy.

Scholars think he probably got out of prison in 61 or 62 AD and we know that he was executed by Nero sometime before Nero died in 68 so sometime between 62 and 68 AD is when this story is written. Why do I tell you that this letter is written? Because it's 30 years after Jesus is gone. It's 30 years after the resurrection and the ascension of Christ. This letter is not written like a year later. This is after 30 years of ministry that Paul is writing this letter to Timothy.

It's mature ... Paul is very wise at this point. He's an accomplished teacher. He's an accomplished theologian. He's left the Jewish sector, the pure Jewish faith ... That's probably not the right phrase but to become what he calls a follower of what he calls "the way" for decades now. Now, he's writing this letter to Timothy so there's a little bit of a combination of everything that he believes.

Paul and Timothy had a special relationship. We know that Paul was Timothy's spiritual father. Timothy had a strong mother and strong grandmother and Paul fill the role as Timothy's spiritual father. In 1 Corinthians 4:17, he calls Timothy "my son whom I love who he is faithful in the Lord". In Philippians 2:22, he says, "Timothy has proved himself because as a son with his Father, he has served me in the work of the Gospel." Then, in 1 Timothy 1 and 2, we read "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command

of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, To Timothy my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord".

Now, Timothy, when you think about Timothy, a lot of times what we think of is a young man. Right? We think of Timothy as a young man and the reason that we think about this is because in 1 Timothy 4:12 and just four chapters later he says, "Let no one despise you for your youth." That's what Paul says to Timothy. The funny thing about this and I'll spare you the math, Timothy was probably in his 40s when he got this book, all right, which is very encouraging to me personally. Do not despise me in my youth, guys. Right?

This is not a letter written to a 23-year-old, wet behind the ears pastor. This is a guy in his probably early to mid-40s if you do the math. It's very interesting. This is the context that we're in. We're in Paul, an experienced, older, theologian pastor, church planner writing to his 40-something-year-old protégé and saying, "All right. All right, man. This is what's going on in the church and this is what I need you to look out for." That's the context of our letter. All right?

Let's read the first eleven verses of 1 Timothy. If you have a Bible, turn to that. Let me just open the letter for you. This is what Timothy would have gotten. By the way, this was written in a way that Paul would know that this letter would probably be read by others. It's not a personal letter. It is a personal letter but it's not a letter that ... It was a private letter.

Here we go. Paul Verse 1, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, To Timothy my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies which promotes speculations rather than a stewardship from God that is by faith. The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons by swerving from these have wandered away into vain discussion. Desiring to be teachers of the law without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions."

"We know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully. Understanding this that the law is not laid down for the just but for the unjust, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinner, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality and slavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, with which I had been entrusted."

### **False vs. True Gospel**

Now, let me ask you a question. If you're to start writing a letter to somebody, would you open up like this? Right? I mean, he's like, "Timothy, my child, my son, my buddy, my protégé." Then like, boom, and he just nails it. He nails it with this idea of these people. He calls them "certain persons". Did you notice that? He calls it twice. He says, "There are certain person ..." Trust me. Paul knew exactly who the certain persons were and so did Timothy. This letter was going to be read so they're being polite. There are certain persons who are behaving in a way that are deluding the Gospel and Paul's not happy about it.

What was going on here, in Ephesus, there were false teachers in the church that were focused and Paul uses these two things. He talks about myths and genealogies. Myths and genealogies. When he's talking about myths, what he's talking about is people are mixing up odd truths into the Christian faith. They may have been coloring it with Gnosticism which is a sect that infiltrated the Jewish faith before Christ and then infected the Christian faith as well. These guys that worship knowledge and everything was rational and try to have a rational explanation for everything.

These teachers were false teachers because what they were focused on was something other than the Gospel. Write this down. The Gospel plus anything is not the Gospel. The Gospel plus anything is not the Gospel anymore. These guys were adding things to the simple truth of Christ, the Son of God, coming to earth, leaving His Father, coming to earth, walking on the earth as a human being, both God and man, dying on the cross for our sins, defeating death Paul says, rising from the dead and ascending into heaven so that whoever believes in Him would have eternal life. That's the Gospel.

You can dive deeper into those things but if you add anything to those things then you are changing the Gospel. It's a different doctrine. When you interpret the Gospel for any purpose other than that, other than salvation, then what you're doing is you're creating a false Gospel. For instance, you see all around new people that interpret the Gospel for political purposes, right? A little layman? I heard some mutters. Yeah, you see people interpret the Gospel for political purposes.

When you say America is God's chosen nation in a way that hides the injustice in our country or raises devotion to patriotism more than devotion to Christ, you've added something to the Gospel. You're not preaching the Gospel and you're doing the opposite. You're teaching a different doctrine. Likewise, if you preach that the Gospel was about salvation from injustice, that believing in Christ will bring you liberation from oppression or for that matter that believing in Christ is going to bring anything other than the opportunity to build God's kingdom here and enjoying forever after you die. If you believe that faith in Christ brings you health or wealth or prosperity or social justice or anything other than what the Bible actually promises, you're adding to the Gospel.

When you have people out there that are teaching these things, they are just like these guys in the church in Ephesus that were adding things to the Gospel and say it's that plus this. That's a different doctrine Paul says. It's not the Gospel. Is there anything wrong with patriotism? No. Is there anything wrong with social justice or mercy or helping people rise out of poverty or ending racism or ending injustice? Absolutely not. Those are all things that we're called to do but we're called to do them because of the Gospel. They are not themselves the Gospel.

When you look at the Gospel through these lenses of these different things and you add some to the Gospel, you're ... Have you seen this new video game? You're like this virtual reality headsets, right? You can put one of these on to play a video game and it puts you on an alternate reality but let me tell you something. When you put it on, you're not really in space. All right? You're not really on a battlefield. You can watch somebody with one of these things on and they might be waving their arms around and turning their body and looking up and looking down. They are not really where their eyes are telling them they are. They're looking at the world through a lens that gives them an alternate reality, a false reality.

When you look at the Gospel through a lens of something other than Jesus died, Jesus rose again, Jesus went into heaven, He's coming back for us, it's like you're looking at the Gospel through one of these lenses. The thing is, when you start believing the Gospel is anything more than those things, your belief

determines your behavior. You will act in accordance with your belief. Your behavior will begin to exhibit things that are not consistent with the Gospel.

What we believe as men, what we believe with our minds, what we believe with our hearts will influence our behavior. Let me give you a fine example of this. Some of you have seen Harry Potter like any of you under 50 so that leaves out a few of you. How many of you have seen Harry Potter? All right. Classic, modern tale of good versus evil told over eight movies making billions of dollars. At the core of the Harry Potter movies are these three characters. Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, who's the female, smart ... She's the smarty-pants of the bunch and then Ron Weasley. Ron is this lovable goofball.

In one of the movies, Ron wants to join the Quidditch team. Quidditch is like airborne soccer. They fly around and they try to get the ball in the goals. Ron wants to join the Quidditch team in the worst way. Ron is so nervous about it that he's literally sick. He can't fly his broom that he's supposed to be able to fly. He's falling all over himself. He's getting sick at breakfast. Harry is his best friend and Harry at the very beginning of the school year won in a little contest in class, a good luck potion. It's guaranteed that when you drink this good luck potion, you will have perfect luck for 24 hours.

On the day of the Quidditch tryouts which Harry is the captain of the team, Harry tricked Ron into thinking that he put his good luck potion into Ron's orange juice. What happens when Ron goes to tryouts? He kills it. Right? You can't get anything past this guy. He's running his broom around in circles. He's doing flippity-flips. I mean, anything that gets close to him, he's knocking away. Hermione is mad because she's also the conscience of the group and she's like, "That's not fair. He had an unfair advantage of the other guys that were trying." Harry pulls out the potion and he goes, "I didn't put in his orange juice. Ron just thought I did."

Always, guys, our behavior illustrates what we believe to be true. When you see people doing things that you think are irrational, almost everybody acts in a way that's consistent with what they believe. They don't act usually ... I mean, once in a while, people act irrationally but for the most part, every activity that people participate in, in some way is consistent with what they believe to be true. Belief and behavior inextricably linked.

The Gospel doesn't change. The Gospel is the same. If you change your beliefs but the Gospel stays the same then that means that if you act out of accordance with the Gospel, then you're not really believing in the true Gospel. This is what Paul was saying to Timothy. He's like, "What for these guys whose behavior, whose teaching is not in accordance of what true Gospel is." What Timothy understand is that when you believe in the Gospel, two things happen. Look at Verse 5. Verse 5, he says, "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

The first thing I would say is if you believe in the Gospel, you act out of love. Conversely, think about this, if you sense your heart is not pure, if you sense that your conscience is not clear, if you sense that your faith isn't in Christ but in something else, that's a good time to stop and reevaluate and say, "Oh, hang on a second. If I'm not acting in love, why am I not acting in love? I must believe something other than the Gospel. Maybe I added something to it. Maybe I took something away from it."

What I think most guys add to the Gospel is it's Jesus and me are going to save me. Jesus and me are going to save me. In other words, I've got to do stuff in order to be saved. Jesus and me and are going to make me happy. I've got to do stuff to make me happy. It's like you bring Jesus along for the ride. When you bring Jesus along for the ride, I got to tell you, guys, that puts all the pressure on you to make things right. It puts all the pressure on your happiness as your responsibility. Your salvation is your

responsibility. We get frustrated when we live that because, ultimately, we realized that we can't live up to that. It just won't work.

What happens is when you see somebody that's living out of that belief system, they become more frustrated and more frustrated and more frustrated and they become, frankly, difficult to be around. It comes down to what we believe. The Gospel not only results in love though, the other hallmark that Paul talks about is truth. Paul shows this by stating the opposite. In Verses 6 and 7, he says, "Certain persons ..." Remember those certain persons. "... by swerving from these have wandered away into vain discussion. Desiring to be teachers of the law without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions."

Paul is saying that there are people in Ephesus who want to be teachers but they don't have a pure heart, they don't have a clear conscience, and they don't have a sincere faith so they end up talking about things that they don't really understand. They ended up saying things that really aren't worth hearing. We've all been around these guys. Right? These certain persons that talked very confidently about things and you're like, "That's just a load of crap." I can't believe that guys are right in church, right in a small group setting, right in a Sunday school class. Hopefully, not right from the pulpit.

You run into these guys. They're just so confident in this bizarre, off-center belief system. That's not the Gospel. Why? Because the Gospel plus anything isn't the Gospel. They become one of the certain persons. Please do not do this. Don't point to them and say, "I think, you might be a certain person." Don't do that. All right? You can test what you're hearing by listening to what they're saying and figuring out, is this consistent with the Gospel or are they adding something to it.

Do they love the Gospel? Do they love Jesus or do they love what they think comes with being Jesus? Do they love football or do they love what comes with being a football player? Do they love Christ or do they love what comes with being in a church? Do they love the community, the culture of the church? Do they love the fact that in many churches if you speak well, you get to speak whether or not what you're saying always is truth? Do they love the culture of it? In other words, are they about themselves? Somebody that's about themselves ends up being these certain persons that Paul is talking to Timothy about. This brings us to our big idea that **the hallmarks of a Gospel-shaped life or a life shaped by the Gospel, a life shaped by the Gospel are love and truth.**

### **The Fruit of Your Beliefs**

Then let me ask you this question. What are the fruits of your own beliefs? What are the fruits of your own beliefs? Let me give you some examples. If your world view is based on greed or materialism or power or status, you won't serve the greater good, you'll serve your own best interest. Every decision you make is going to be seen through the filter of what's best for yourself. Even your altruistic acts will be for show. They'll be for reputation, not purely for the good of those that you're helping. If you have to be seen to help, you don't have a Gospel-based world view, you have me-based world view.

Let's go the other way. What if your world view is victimhood, powerlessness? You're not going to seek to better yourself but you're probably going to seek to tear other people down. Every decision you make is going to be based on the suspicion that somebody is out to get you. You've heard about the paranoid guy who said, "I wouldn't be paranoid if everybody wasn't out to get me."

Have you ever seen people like this? They're just convinced that every interaction they have whether at work or at home and their family, that somebody is out to get them. That somebody is trying to get the

better of them. They question the motive of every person's actions and they focus on the actions that confirm their suspicions or they'll just twist facts to meet what they already believe is true.

When you look at the world and you change things to make them accommodate your beliefs, that's not the Gospel because Paul says the result of the Gospel is, what? Truth. Truth. When you have somebody speaking into your life, guys, that says, "I don't really think that's true." Yeah, you probably want to examine the facts but if you realized that the facts and your perception of them don't line up, I'd start looking at your heart and say, "What am I believing about myself? What am I believing about the world that's causing me to not see truth for what it is?" It's not the Gospel because the Gospel leads to love. The Gospel leads to truth.

Man, Paul is diving right into it here. Right? He's telling Timothy to root this people out, to correct them. That's why he says, "Don't let them despise you for your youth," later on. He's saying, "Look, you go in there and you do what you got to do." That's my encouragement to us as men. We need to go into our own hearts and do what we have to do. We need to make sure that we're not those certain person who are adding something to the Gospel, who are twisting the facts to accommodate our own presuppositions but instead are focused on the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

There's some questions in your handout. I just want to draw your attention to them because we talked about a couple of different things. One is, Paul gives us this great example of being a spiritual father to Timothy over a long period of time. Who's your spiritual father? Is there somebody that's feeding into you that can help you see truth for what it is, help you see the Gospel for what it is? Guys, is there somebody that you're being a spiritual father to?

A critical missing link in men's discipleship in the church is older men ... When I say "older", I mean, more mature in the faith ... Spiritually fathering younger men in the faith and helping them come along because when you're a child, you think childishly. When you're a child in the faith, you think childishly about spiritual things. You need a guide that's more mature to help give you that point of view. Maybe you could be that guy for somebody or maybe you need a guy like that to be that for you.

Then to think about how are you looking at the world. Are there lenses that you're looking at people around you? Are these things that are shaping the way that you interpret truth? Then how are you living your life? Is your life characterized by love and by truth? Is it characterized by suspicion or anger or bitterness or resentment? Think about how you're living your life and take time to do a little gut check. To really think about, am I looking at the world through an artificial reality? Am I looking at the world through the truth of the Gospel? Let's pray.

### **Closing Prayer**

Father, thank you so much for inspiring your son, Paul, to write this letter to his spiritual son, Timothy. Lord, thank you for the faithfulness of church fathers down through the centuries who have time and time again returned and focused on the Gospel and the truth of the Gospel. Lord, it's so much a part of our natural tendencies to add something into it. We just can't believe it's as simple as it is. Lord, you said that your yoke was easy and your burden was light. Your teachings are pure and simple and they strike to the heart of who we are and of how the world works.

Lord, I pray that you would help us to focus on the simple truth of the Gospel, to put our hope in you, Lord, and not in something that we have to do or in something that we expect from the world. Lord, be

with these guys now as they talk through some of these issues but even more importantly, Lord, I pray that you would connect them with each other, that you would bind us together as brothers, that we would be spiritual fathers to each other, spiritual sons to each other so that we can grow in our faith and build your kingdom. Ultimately, Lord, enjoy you forever. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.