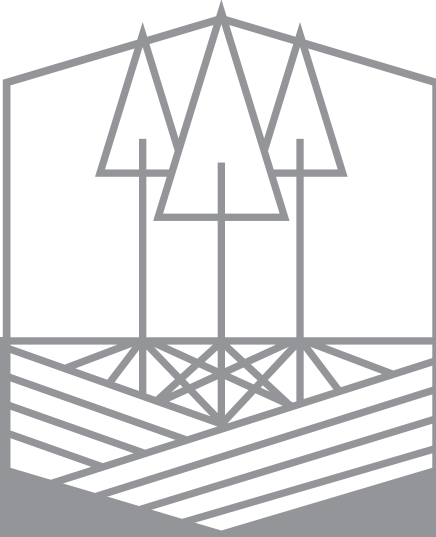


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A 6-SESSION STUDY  
FOR DIALOGUE IN  
COMMUNITY AROUND  
THE SCRIPTURES



# LIVING IN GOD'S HOUSEHOLD

First Principles from the Pastorals

BY JEFF REED

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These materials are designed to integrate with BILD International resources, which are designed to help churches train leaders.

All Scripture, unless otherwise noted, is from the New American Standard Bible.

ISBN 1-891441-13-2

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# THE INTENT OF THE PASTORALS: HOUSEHOLD ORDER

1

Paul spent about fifteen years establishing the churches he was part of, as he set out to accomplish the stewardship God had called him to twenty-seven years earlier on the road to Damascus. In his early letters to these churches, he worked hard to stabilize them in the gospel they had embraced. In the middle letters, he fully revealed the Church (especially in Ephesians, as we saw in book four of this series) and called the churches to fully embrace this teaching and vision, as they strove together with a one-minded commitment to the progress of the gospel. Now he is building for the long haul. He will leave them soon. The young men he has trained will take over. Yet he has work to finish: The churches need to be fully set in order. The social structure and leadership need to be clearly established in light of the revelation he received. He sets out to do this in these final letters to Timothy and Titus.

In this session, we will attempt to discover Paul's intent in writing these letters. We will look at all three letters as his final body of work. We will attempt to write an intention statement for the *Pastorals* (refers to these three letters as a collection) as well as the contribution of each letter to his purpose in writing.



## Study the Scriptures

READ THE PASSAGES: 1 AND 2 TIMOTHY AND TITUS  
WITH A FOCUS ON 1 TIMOTHY 3:14–16; TITUS 1:5–11;  
AND 2 TIMOTHY 2:1–15 AND 4:1–8

### Think Through the Questions:

1. What were some of Paul's final concerns for his churches? Which concern do you think was the most important?
2. Why do you think these concerns were so important to Paul in his last few years?
3. How does 1 Timothy 3:14–16 relate to Paul's stewardship of revealing the Church—the household of God? In what way is Paul still fulfilling his stewardship as described in Ephesians 3:8–10 (as we studied in the last booklet)?
4. What evidence do these letters give that the social structure of churches is that of a household?

## Summarize the Core Teaching of the Passage:

Write a paragraph in the space below that summarizes Paul's overall intent for writing these letters to Timothy and Titus. Following that, write a brief statement that describes how each letter contributed to Paul's overall intent. You should end up with one big intent statement and three corollary, subordinate statements.

Intent for Writing the Letters to Timothy and Titus:

To \_\_\_\_\_

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by (1 Timothy) \_\_\_\_\_

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by (Titus) \_\_\_\_\_

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by (2 Timothy) \_\_\_\_\_

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## Consult the Scholars

The following comments are designed to help you better understand the passage and to stimulate your thinking on the implications of the teaching.

### **Read and Reflect on this Brief Commentary on the Intent of the Pastoral Correspondence:**

The Pastorals represent the last works of Paul. He had already written ten letters to the churches over about a twelve-year period. His first letters (Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans) were written to stabilize the new churches in the gospel. His middle letters (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) were written to churches also (except for Philemon), to build a one-mindedness in the churches around two things: the progress of the gospel and the

revelation given to Paul concerning the Church being the whole new plan of God—the new community of God with Christ as the head. These Gentile churches started out being rejected by many in the Jewish churches. But after receiving a letter from the Apostles and leaders in Jerusalem that explained that they were part of the church that began in Jerusalem, they now found themselves at the heart of God’s plan for this new age. In his last letters (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus), Paul focused on completing his work with these churches, since he was nearing the end of his ministry.

**2 Timothy 4:1–8.** Paul talks in 2 Timothy 4:1–8 about finishing his call. Paul’s journey began, in the sense of his call, on the road to Damascus in Acts 9, when he was commissioned by Christ to take the gospel to the Gentiles. In Ephesians 3, he talks of that stewardship broadening to include bringing to light the mystery: that the Jews and Gentiles would become one in a new community called the Church. He was given a special stewardship to fully reveal this Church, as we saw him do in the letter to the Ephesians. It was a manifesto, of sorts, that was delivered to the Ephesian churches. In 2 Timothy, he speaks of this whole journey as a fight. (Remember, at the end of the Ephesians letter, he said our struggle is against “rulers and authorities in heavenly places.”) He claims that he has “fought the good fight” and “kept the faith.” He realizes that he is at the end of his stewardship. Therefore, these letters are, in a very real sense, the end of his life work. Whatever else needs to be revealed (since these letters became part of the New Testament) is found in these letters. They reveal the remainder of Paul’s stewardship.

**2 Timothy 2:1–15.** In this passage, we see Paul building a case for Timothy to follow Paul’s pattern and passion for developing leaders. The famous verse, of course, is 2 Timothy 2:2. There, Paul encourages Timothy to develop leaders in a way that will produce intergenerational leaders. Timothy is to entrust to faithful men as Paul did to him: entrusting sound doctrine (“the teaching”) and entrusting in the same manner that Paul did with him. Paul knows that if Timothy is careful to train future leaders in the way he trained him, then they will also train others, thus creating a chain (four generations) of leaders. Then, the churches will remain strong generation after generation. Paul is also concerned that these leaders become master craftsmen in their ability to handle the teaching. We will spend more time on this in session five, when we will focus on the importance of leadership. For now, it is sufficient to note that the idea of developing leaders is critical to Paul’s purpose in writing these letters.

**Titus 1:5–11.** Paul was concerned that his key men, Timothy and Titus, understand the process of fully establishing the churches. He uses the phrase, “set in order what remains,” which carries the idea of completing the process of establishing the churches. Here Paul unfolds the concept of churches being households. The churches are not fully established until elders are appointed and the churches properly ordered as extended households—older men, older women, younger women, and younger men all properly functioning as one large family. This would situate the churches to adorn the gospel with

their harmonious community life and increase the impact of their lives as they engaged in good works. (The argument of Titus as a whole.) Specifically, in this passage, the foundational point is the appointment of elders who, if fully qualified, would keep false teachers from coming in and upsetting whole households, thus disestablishing what Paul had carefully built.

**1 Timothy 3:14–16.** This is the key passage that states why Paul wrote 1 Timothy; it is also the organizing idea of the Pastorals as a collection. David Verner makes an amazingly convincing case in his book entitled *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles*. Verner argues that both 1 Timothy and Titus follow the literary genre of the day—they are household texts, which view the social structure of the community as a household. 1 Timothy is a household text. It looks at the community as a household: elders, deacons, women, men, widows, etc. Titus is the same, beginning with elders, then older men, older women, younger women, younger men, slaves, etc. They instruct at a community level just as the individual household texts (remember the last booklet on Ephesians 5:22–6:9: husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, slaves) instruct families in the household of God how they should live. That is what makes the intention statement of 1 Timothy so central to all the Pastorals. Paul says he wrote the first letter to Timothy so that everyone would know how a person should live in the household of God. He actually says “in a household” referring to local churches. However, it applies to the whole household of God, too, since he says that they make up the Church (the household) of the “living God.” Paul gives further instruction to the churches, which is his stewardship, remember, to fully reveal the administration of the mystery—the church (Ephesians 2:8–10). Now here is a remarkable insight: The word *administration* in Ephesians is made up of two words: “house” (oikos) and “law” (nomos). It means house law, management of a household, administration. Paul is talking about management of the households of God, the churches. This is why an elder, for example, needs to be a good manager of his own household. Otherwise he would not be a good manager of the household of God—the local church community. Look at what Paul says in 1 Timothy 3:14–16. He is writing to instruct (again completing the full revelation of the church) in how one ought to live in the household of God. It is his job to bring to light the household management (administration) of the church according to Ephesians. And now he is completing his job, filling it out fully, in these letters to his two faithful men—Timothy and Titus.

This leads us to a very important conclusion. The social structure of the churches is that of a household. The instruction Paul is giving here, right down to the care of widows, is that of a household. We are not free to make up our own management system or replace it with some modern day business management model. There are guidelines with roles and responsibilities laid out: elders, deacons, older men, older women, younger women, younger men, slaves, widows, etc. We are to take these seriously. God’s design is very natural. The church is a family of families, an extended family if you will. The beauty of this design is that it transcends all human culture. It works anywhere in the world, at any time in history, in any culture. God’s churches are to have order—household order.



If the guidelines are followed the churches will last generation after generation. Thus, this household order is the completion of Paul's revelation of the mystery. It is crucial to him laying lasting foundations in his churches. So he writes these final instructions to his two faithful young leaders, who will be key to the task of the churches being established around these natural, God-given guidelines—around this social structure.

### Read and Reflect on Key Quotes:

The following quote is taken from David Verner's book *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles*. Verner's work, actually a doctoral dissertation, argues that 1 Timothy 3:14–16 is the organizational center of all three letters and that the letters are structured as community-wide household texts. After extensive research on these two points, this is Verner's point:

“It has now been established that the author of the Pastorals characterizes the church as the household of God in 1 Tim 3:14 and that he writes with the explicitly stated intention of describing the way that church members ought habitually to behave as members of this great household. It has further been established that much of the material in 1 Timothy and Titus reflects the influence of the station code schema, which first appears in the *Haustafeln*, which represent a paraenetic adaptation of the traditional topos on household management. Thus the author of the Pastorals, who conceives of the church as the household of God, presents material concerned with behavior in the church according to a schema that is closely associated with the early church's ethical codes for household life.”

In the conclusion of his dissertation Verner adds the following:

“The author of the Pastorals, who identifies with the leadership, conceptualizes the church as a great household with its many and diverse ranks of servants and its οἰοδδεοπότης firmly entrenched in his patriarchal authority. This comparison is in many ways apt, since it evokes the size and complexity as well as the authority structure of the church of the Pastorals. However, the author presents the image of the household not only for descriptive, but also, and more importantly, for prescriptive purposes. In the traditional patriarchal household the householder is expected to exercise his authority in competent fashion, keeping those in subordinate stations properly subject to him and representing his household in the larger community. The other members of the household, typically, women, children and servants, are expected to acknowledge their subordinate positions and to behave accordingly. In the church, the author is suggesting, authority is properly concentrated in the hands of an official leadership that is expected to govern effectively and to represent the church to the world. As in the household, women, slaves, children and young men properly belong to subordinate stations. They should know the limits of these stations and keep within these limits.”<sup>1</sup>



Record any insights from the brief commentary and quotes:



# Think Through the Issues

Paul was very concerned to complete his work with his churches, so he used Timothy and Titus to finish setting things in order. He wanted the churches to follow a particular order and to build long-term on the social structure of the community as a large household. This was his model for all the churches. Yet today, a new trendy model on how to “do church” comes along every decade, birthing many competitive varieties almost instantly and often carrying a social structure that is, at many points, at odds with the community household social structure set forth by Paul. And down through the centuries, the institutional church, with its multiple traditions, often created church hierarchical structures that rarely resembled the household social structure of Paul’s churches.

We need to carefully explore the implications of the household as the social structure for Christ’s churches. We need to explore whether there is a relationship between the household social structure and the intergenerational success of churches. And we need to explore whether it affected Paul’s strategy for completing the establishing process with his churches. We will also consider the implications of ignoring this social structure and the logic behind God establishing a universal, for all time, social structure for His churches. This issue is critical for renewal and church-planting movements in the West, and it is vital to the long-term success of large-scale church-planting movements of the Global South.

**ISSUE:** The household as the social structure for all churches

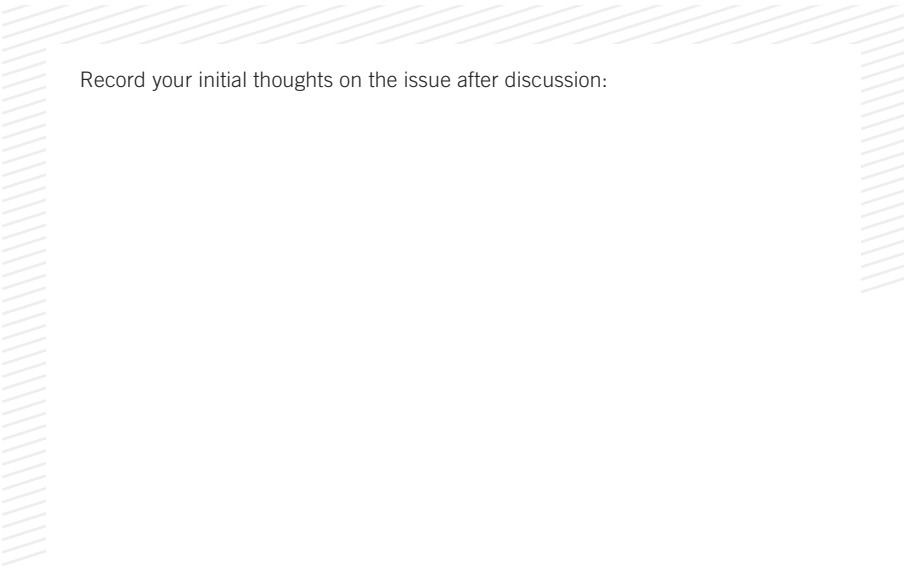
## Think Through the Issue Before Discussion:

1. What are some of the implications of the social structure of the church being a household—a community functioning as an extended family?
2. Why do you think this social structure is so important to God, for all churches?
3. What would happen to the intergenerational strength of churches if these instructions were ignored? if they were replaced by some other type of social structure, such as an organizational or business social structure?
4. After writing these letters, why was Paul so confident that his stewardship was complete and that he had finished his course and could die?



Record your initial thoughts on the issue before discussion:

**Discuss the issue in your small group.**



Record your initial thoughts on the issue after discussion:



# Apply the Principles

It is now time to respond to what you have studied and discussed. Take your time on this section.

## **Think Back Through the First Three Steps.**

### **Design an Application for Your Life.**

Think through your understanding of the social structure of the early churches. Do you understand the basic social structure God set forth under the stewardship of Paul? Are you ordering your life around these guidelines? the life of your family?

Evaluate whether your life is properly set in order in light of the community texts of the Pastorals: