

1 Timothy 1:18,19

*1 Timothy 1:18 This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may **fight the good fight**,¹⁹ keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.*

Have you ever watched a 15-round boxing match? Have you ever run a marathon? The New Testament uses both of these images to describe the Christian life. The Christian life begins with a simple decision to receive Jesus Christ and His free gift of forgiveness. And that simple decision guarantees that your eternal destiny with Jesus is secure. But the period between receiving Jesus and meeting Jesus is a long run, a grueling fight, which many do not finish. This is why there are so many New Testament passages that teach how to run the race, how to fight the good fight.

Paul has commissioned Timothy to stay indefinitely in Ephesus in order to restore a church that has been ravaged by false teachers. Some of those false teachers had been elders of this church (Acts 20:29,30), so you can imagine the mistrust and discouragement that Timothy was facing. It will be a long haul, so in this letter Paul not only instructs Timothy on what to do; he also instructs him on how to stay in the fight. His instruction can help us to fight the good fight that God has assigned to each of us.

Paul's first instruction relates to "the prophecies previously made concerning you." Paul explicitly says that "by them" (referring to these



prophecies) Timothy will be able to fight the good fight. Paul refers to these prophecies again in 1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6. The prophecies concerned a spiritual gift that would enable Timothy to play his role as Paul's colleague. So Paul's point is: "If you remember how God has gifted you and faithfully use that gift, this will help you to fight the good fight."

The New Testament teaches that God has given all Christians at least one spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 12:11; Romans 12:6). As we choose to serve God in community with other Christians, God will reveal how He has gifted us to make a special contribution to His church. Although we may not receive a prophecy identifying our gift, we will usually receive a pattern of feedback from other Christians that confirms our gifts. The God who gifts us to serve Him certainly knows best how to communicate what gifts He has given us.

Why does faithfully using our spiritual gifts help us to fight the good fight? First, we fight most effectively when we use the equipment God gave us. Spiritual gifts by definition equip us to make the unique contribution to God's kingdom that He designed us to make. If God has gifted you to teach His Word, for example, then fighting the good fight will certainly involve teaching His Word! Second, spiritual gifts are closely related to spiritual motivation. With the gifts God gives us also comes the desire to use them in service, and godly pleasure when we do use them. This motivation helps us to persevere through difficulties and spiritual attack. This is why Christians who know where they're gifted and who faithfully use their gifts are more likely to stay in the fight over many years.

Do you know how God has gifted you to serve Him? If not, ask Him to reveal this to you as you serve others with your brothers and sisters in Christ. If you do know, use your gifts on a regular basis – and this will greatly help you to fight the good fight!

Paul's second instruction to help Timothy to fight the good fight is to "keep a good conscience." He reminds Timothy of those who rejected a



good conscience and consequently “suffered shipwreck with regard to their faith.” This is obviously the opposite of fighting the good fight!

A good conscience refers to being sensitive and responsive to God’s personal moral guidance. Conscience is a God-given moral compass that He gives to every human being. To function properly, our consciences must be renewed by God’s Holy Spirit and trained by His Word. As we walk with God, He will warn us through our consciences of impending moral danger, and He will correct us when we deviate from His moral guidance. While none of us will live a morally perfect life, it is of utmost importance that we normally respond to God’s guidance through our conscience (see 2 Corinthians 1:12; 1 Timothy 1:5). This is the lesson God impressed upon David after He restored David from his affair with Bathsheba:

Psalm 32:8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go;

I will counsel you with My eye upon you.

⁹ Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, Otherwise they will not come near to you.

¹⁰ Many are the sorrows of the wicked, But he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him.

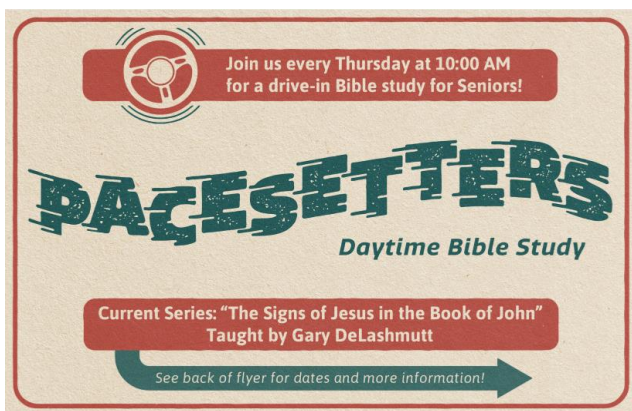
To be a moral mule is to reject a good conscience, and to plunge our lives into moral chaos and personal misery. But to be sensitive to God’s moral counsel is to keep a good conscience, to trust His moral guidance – and to live with the protection of His lovingkindness.

Do you normally heed God’s warnings of moral danger, or do you normally reserve the right to disregard them? Do you normally respond quickly to God’s moral correction, or do you normally rationalize or blame-shift? This is the difference between keeping or rejecting a good conscience, and a good conscience is an indispensable element in fighting the good fight!



Lord Jesus, thank You for forgiving all of my sins and promising me eternal life. And thank You for giving me a good fight to fight until I see You face to face. I am not able to fight this good fight without Your empowering and protection. Thank You for promising to be with me every step of the way. Help me to faithfully use the spiritual gifts You have given me, and teach me to keep a good conscience as I walk with You. Surround me with Your lovingkindness.

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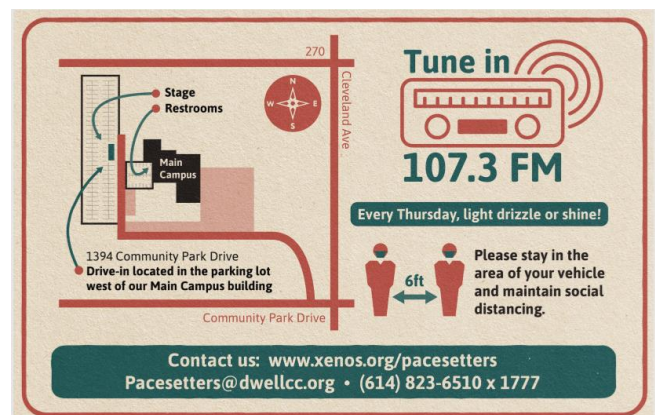


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