

Preaching Notes: 1 Timothy 3:14–16

Genesis Church • Petoskey

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Scripture Reading

1 Timothy 3:14–16 (page 1,691)

Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how God's people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great:

He appeared in the flesh,

was vindicated by the Spirit,

was seen by angels,

was preached among the nations,

was believed on in the world,

was taken up in glory.

Big Idea

Your conduct shows the world the truth about who God is.

Introduction: Two Kinds of Families

People (and families) tend to fall into one of two categories when it comes to food:

- **Grazers** — snack all day (charcuterie boards, dips, chips, bacon tomato cups, chocolate-covered cashews...). The meal itself isn't the main event.

- **Feasters** — the sit-down meal is non-negotiable. Three proper meals a day. When visiting family in the Brazilian jungle, lunchtime meant pulling over, firing up a gas grill, and cooking—even on the side of the road.

Most family differences are “neither here nor there.” But some things matter deeply because they shape how people conduct themselves in a household (stealing is wrong; whining isn’t how we talk; kindness and gentleness are expected).

Why this matters: Paul is writing so the church will know *how God’s people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household*. This is the heart of 1 Timothy. After many “do’s and don’ts,” Paul now answers the question a three-year-old loves to ask: **Why?**

Point 1: The Context of Your Conduct

(Where it matters how you live)

God cares about your behavior because you are part of His family—the household of God, the church of the living God.

- Coming to faith isn’t only a private transaction with Jesus. You enter a new family. Children of God are grown and formed the same way biological children are: in a household, by a community, through relationship.
- We live in a culture that romanticizes rugged individual spirituality (“I meet God in the deer blind / on the lake / in nature”). Nature and solitude are good, but God’s design for growth is the gathered people of God.
- Growth happens in the *friction* of relationships—bearing burdens, confronting sin, encouraging one another. It is often unseen and almost imperceptible in the moment, yet real.

Illustration: Rough-and-tumble wrestling with Theo (and eventually Suvie). Studies show this kind of play with dad strengthens emotional regulation, social awareness, and resilience. In the moment no one is thinking, “This is neurologically beneficial”—yet it is. The church functions similarly: when we gather and “wrestle” together, growth happens.

Additional thought: We gather to the *living* God, not the selective gods of Ephesus (Poseidon for travel, Venus for love, Artemis for children, etc.). The living God wants all of you—not just the part of life where you feel you need a boost. Come expecting Him to move, challenge, and grow you through His people.

Application: Gather regularly with believers. This is not a once-a-month activity; it is the context in which Christlikeness is formed.

Point 2: The Result of Your Conduct

(You become a pillar and foundation of truth)

The church is “the pillar and foundation of the truth.”

We live in a rapidly changing, truth-challenged world (AI, social unrest, political polarization, subjective emotional experience as ultimate authority, etc.). Every generation has faced its own

crises (e.g., nuclear-drill generation). In the midst of unique anxieties, the church is called to hold and display an unchanging foundation.

- Our foundation is the faith once delivered—Jesus Christ and the Word of God. There is no “Newer Testament to Tokyo Drift.”
- It is good, especially for younger people, to have a church with the guts to say: God’s design doesn’t change. It was right the first time.

G.K. Chesterton (early 20th century):

“It is easy to be a madman: it is easy to be a heretic... It is always easy to let the age have its head; the difficult thing is to keep one’s own... There’s an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands... that wild truth reeling but erect.”

(Summary: A foundation of truth is not the boring default—it is a high-wire act. Every generation invents new, easy errors. Staying with the old, precise truth is the real adventure.)

Belief must flow into conduct, and conduct gives credibility to belief. Faith is not merely intellectual; it is lived.

- Tim Keller: When Christians live what they believe, faith becomes not only intellectually credible but “soul-achingly desirable.” The skeptic should be able to say, “I wish that were true.”
- Driving illustration: Frustration with other drivers can make us forget human dignity and God’s love for all people. Someone who loves us (and loves God) has to remind us of what we actually believe.
- Squelches illustration: A child’s actions (refusing to put a finger in the hole) reveal true belief more than their words do. Our conduct puts what we believe on a pillar for the world to see—how we disagree, rest, parent, dress, pray, welcome strangers, handle anger, spend money, and get back up after failure.

Point 3: The Surprising Source of Godliness

(How we actually get there)

Paul does not end with a longer list of rules. He points to a Person:

He appeared in the flesh,

was vindicated by the Spirit,

was seen by angels,

was preached among the nations,

was believed on in the world,

was taken up in glory.

If asked “What does it take to be godly?” most of us start listing activities (church attendance, early mornings, cold showers, serving, etc.). Paul puts the engine in the car: **love for a Person**.

Illustrations of how love changes us:

- College couch marked “TAKE ME” (held up by a milk crate). Once someone you love cares about couches, you will brave winter roads and trailers for a better one.
- Construction equipment. Love for a little boy who lights up at excavators and cement trucks changes what excites *you*—even when he’s not there.

Nothing transforms conduct like love. The ultimate love is the love of Jesus Christ—God in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, risen, preached, believed, and ascended in glory. Christian conduct is not the result of trying harder to be better people; it is the fruit of trusting the Person who is Jesus.

Conclusion

It matters how we live—because our lives display the truth about who God is. We do not live perfect lives; we live grace-filled lives empowered by relationship with Christ. These are the lives that become a pillar of truth in a changing world.

Christ reigns supreme in glory over every trouble, crisis, and anxiety. That is our hope, our comfort, and the truth we gather to proclaim, remember, and be disciplined in every week.