



September 12, 2010

**Focus Scripture**  
**1 Timothy**  
**1:12-17**

Additional Scriptures  
Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28  
Psalm 14  
Luke 15:1-10

**O God, as you seek out those who are lost and lonely, find us. As we live in your loving presence, lead us to ultimate joy and freedom. May this good news stir our great desire to seek you and your ways. Amen.**

Check out Spirit Sightings for connections between current events and the focus passage. Spirit Sighting are posted weekly prior to the date of use.

# Growing in God's Love

Being in a relationship with God can, at times, be like a lover's quarrel. However, God never gives up, always seeking to repair the relationship and restore the love. God takes the initiative so that we may live securely in God's liberating and nurturing ways. As we are growing in God's love, we can learn to mirror God's relationship with us in our relationships with one another.

## Focus Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

First Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus are often referred to as the Pastoral Epistles because they offer advice on the life of faith and the regulation of church discipline. In addition, these letters urge the early Christian communities – and Christians today – to resist false teachings.

The author of 1 Timothy was not Paul; key theological phrases found in other Pauline letters are not present. The writer seeks to faithfully address new situations with Paul's voice. For the first readers, using Paul's name would have given authority to this writer's words.

The letter is addressed to Timothy, the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother who was a Christian. Timothy first worked with Paul in Lystra (Acts 16). This letter, written as from Paul, sets out to encourage Timothy – use of this name may represent those entrusted to spread Paul's teachings – to provide guidance in church administration and to oppose false teaching.

The letter asserts that the tradition passed on from Jesus to Paul and now to Timothy is set against the false proclamations of Hymenaeus and Alexander (v. 20). The importance of faith is illustrated by Paul's life and the powerful transformation he experienced. The real hero in this drama is Christ. After all, Paul did not cause his own transformation; it was the work of the risen Christ. The gift of Christ's grace, along with faith and love, transformed Paul to live faithfully and minister with gusto. Though formerly a persecutor of Christians, Paul "received mercy" (v. 13) and was made an example (v. 16). God's generous mercy and love deserve the honour and glory for the transforming work in Paul's life and in ours.

The phrase "the saying is sure" (v. 15) is a remnant of a confession from worship in the early church.

It sets up the strong theological statement that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (v. 15). The phrase "saying is sure" appears four other times in the Pastoral Epistles. Each time, it introduces a similar theological statement about the saving purpose of Jesus the Christ.

Telling one's story helps God's people understand their struggles with life and faith. It also gives powerful testimony to the power of God's mercy, which is beyond human limitations. Just as Jesus' stories are retold, Paul's conversion story is retold in 1 Timothy.

God not only holds the Body of Christ accountable in the soundness of faith, God also holds the body together in love. Indeed, it is God's love that helps the community grow and bring about longed-for changes. In **Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28**, the prophet laments the plight of the world due to human failings. Still, God will not let the world be completely destroyed. Similarly in **Psalm 14**, God is dismayed by human choices, but human sin will not prevail. God will restore God's people. In Luke 15, Jesus tells how what is "lost" will be restored through parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son. **Luke 15:1-10** celebrates the shepherd's joy in finding a lost sheep.



Seeking what is lost and seeking to restore the world, God brings hope. The powerful ways in which God acts in our world can be seen in people like Paul and Timothy, and also in our own lives. Such saving love stirs us to respond and live into God's hope. When have you experienced God's gifts of mercy and overflowing grace? In what ways are your life and your church being transformed as you are growing in God's love?

