



john 15:4  
A B i d e in ME



Bible studies for disciples who make disciples

Loudonville Community Church

Volume 1 - Number 19  
The week of March 6, 2016

**A Pillar of the Truth**  
I Timothy 3:14-16

**THIS WEEK'S CORE STATEMENT**

**BIBLICAL COMMUNITY:** Fellowshiping with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, other people's lives and, in the world.

The local church provides the context for Christians to practice Biblical Community. As we reflect upon church membership for the next few weeks, we will be using Thom S. Rainer's book, *I am a Church Member: Discovering the Attitude that Makes the Difference* as a resource for our Growth Group study guide. At the close of each chapter Rainer provides a pledge that captures one vital aspect of church membership. These are the third and fourth pledges:

**The Third Pledge:** I am a church member. I will not let my church be about my preferences and desires. That is self-serving. I am a member in this church to serve others and to serve Christ. My Savior went to a cross for me. I can deal with any inconveniences and matters that just aren't my preference or style.

**The Fourth Pledge:** I am a church member. I will pray for my pastor every day. I understand that the pastor's work is never ending. His days are filled with numerous demands that bring emotional highs and lows. He must deal with critics. He must be a good husband and father. Because my pastor cannot do all things in his own power, I will pray for his strength and wisdom daily.

If you are already a member of Loudonville Community Church, I urge you to consider if these pledges reflect the kind of member you are and the kind of member you would like to be. If you are not yet a member of Loudonville Community Church, we ask you would embrace these pledges personally as you join this community. May God help us all to become members who work wholeheartedly to build the Body of Christ in the Capital Region!

*I am a church member. I will not let my church be about my preferences and desires . . .*

*I am a church member. I will pray for my pastor every day. I understand that the pastor's work is never ending . . .*

## This Week's Complementary Passage

### Philippians 2:1-18 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. <sup>14</sup> Do all things without grumbling or disputing, <sup>15</sup> that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup> holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. <sup>17</sup> Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. <sup>18</sup> Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

#### Marking Guide for Acts (not all words occur in the passage)

appointed

baptized

Caesar

enemy/demons/Satan

eternal life

fathers & children [in one color  
different from Moses]

Gentiles

gospel

grace

Holy Spirit

in the name of Jesus Christ

Jesus

Jews

Law (of Moses)

men of the council

Moses [in different color from  
fathers & children]

prayer

repent (repentance)

resurrection (raised up)

salvation

suffering

the Way

the promise of the Father

witnesses

word of God

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#### STEP ONE . . .

**READING** what the passage says  
(Read it at least three times)

I Timothy 3:14-16 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, <sup>15</sup> if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. <sup>16</sup> Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

He was manifested in the flesh,  
vindicated by the Spirit,  
seen by angels,  
proclaimed among the nations,  
believed on in the world,  
taken up in glory.

#### STEP TWO . . .

**OBSERVING** how the passage moves

Return to the passage and **mark key words, phrases and movements:**

- Circle all of the words in this passage that speak of the Triune God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit, etc.).
- Underline the significant verbs/action words in this passage.
- In I Timothy 3:15, underline the phrase “you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God.”
- In I Timothy 3:15, underline the phrase “a pillar and buttress of the truth.”
- In I Timothy 3:16, underline the phrase “mystery of godliness.”
- In I Timothy 3:16, underline the phrase “manifested in the flesh.”
- In I Timothy 3:16, underline the phrase “vindicated by the Spirit.”
- In I Timothy 3:16, underline the phrase “proclaimed among the nations.”
- In I Timothy 3:16, underline the phrase “believed on in the world.”

**STEP THREE . . .**

**Ask the five “W” questions and the one “H” question:**

1. **WHO** is speaking? Who is this about? Who are the main characters? And, to **whom** is it speaking?
2. **WHAT** is the subject of the passage? What does the passage say about the subject?
3. **WHEN** do or will the events occur? When did something happen to a particular person, people, or nation?
4. **WHERE** did or will this happen?
5. **WHY** is something said or mentioned? Why would or will this happen? Why at this time? Why this person?
6. **HOW** will it happen? How is it to be done? How is it illustrated?

## STEP FOUR . . .

### UNDERSTANDING what the passage means

*This commentary is intended to enhance your own study of the text.*

#### Commentary on I Timothy 3:14-16 (ESV)

**3:14** - “I hope to come to you soon.” Paul plans to visit Timothy in Ephesus. The Spirit directed that he write so that God’s will expressed in I Timothy might bless and direct His church throughout time. These verses relate to public worship.

**3:15** - “In the household of God.” Paul uses many powerful corporate metaphors to describe the church, such as “body,” but the family/household is one of the most insightful (God as Father, Jesus as Son, believers as children).

“**The church.**” *Ekklesia* is a compound Greek word from “out of” and “to call.” This was used in Koine Greek to describe any kind of assembly, such as a town assembly. The early Jewish Church chose this term because it was similar to the Hebrew term *qahal*, which was used in the phrase “the assembly of Israel.” The New Testament writers asserted that they were the “divinely called out ones” who were the People of God of their day. The early Jewish believers saw no radical break between the Old Testament People of God and themselves, the New Testament People of God. Believers, therefore, assert that the Church of Jesus Christ is the true heir to the Old Testament Scriptures.

“**Of the living God.**” The Old Testament asserts that there is one and only one God. The adjective “living” comes from the covenant name for God, YHWH, which is the causative form of the Hebrew verb “to be.”

“**A pillar and buttress of the truth.**” This may be an allusion to Isaiah 28:16, God’s foundation is Jesus the cornerstone, which is also alluded to in II Timothy 2:19. This would have been a powerful image for Timothy and the church he cared for because the temple of Diana was in Ephesus. It was one of the Seven Wonders of the World, with one hundred huge pillars, each over eighteen meters high, lifting its massive marble roof. As well as supporting the roof, the pillars also served to hold it high so that it could be seen from a distance. The Greek term truth (*alētheia*) is very common in Paul’s writings and it usually refers to gospel content.

**3:16** - “Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness.” “Mystery” usually refers to the Gentile mission, which may be a key to this verse. This phrase introduces an early confessional statement or a Christian hymn.

“**He was manifested in the flesh.**” This speaks of the Incarnation (birth) of Jesus Christ at Bethlehem: His life, teachings, death, and resurrection, which fully reveal the Father. There is also the strong inference of His pre-existence. This is the central truth of the Gospels about Jesus Christ, that He was fully God and fully human.

“**Vindicated by the Spirit.**” This phrase has been understood in several ways. It may mean that the Holy Spirit was active in Jesus’ ministry or that Jesus’ spirit was affirmed by the Father while Jesus lived as a human being. Some theologians see “Spirit” as referring to Jesus’ divinity, which was vindicated by His resurrection.

“**Seen by angels.**” The angels longed to know what God was doing with fallen mankind. However, it may refer to the angels’ ministering to Jesus, either at His temptation experience, in the Garden of Gethsemane, or immediately after the resurrection. This phrase is so short that several theories have been offered by commentators: it could refer to the angels ministering to Jesus, or to the angels beholding His ascension, or to the angels beholding His exalted heavenly enthronement. All of these theories are somewhat speculative.

“**Proclaimed among the nations.**” This is the worldwide preaching of the gospel which would have been extremely shocking to the Jews of the first century, but this is really the whole point.

“**Believed on in the world.**” Not only was it a universal message, but there was a universal response, and now the Church is made up of both Jew and Gentile. This has always been God’s plan. The one true God has fulfilled His promise of Genesis 3:15. Personal repentance and faith in the gospel now, in this life, opens heaven for everyone.

“**Taken up in glory.**” This seems to refer to His ascension. It is surprising that Jesus’ death, resurrection and return are left out, but if this was a Christian hymn, quoted possibly only in part, then it is understandable.

## STEP FIVE . . .

### SUMMARIZING the message

The city of Ephesus was the second largest city in the Roman Empire. It was a major commercial center. It was also a place of excessive license and sexual immorality. Its most famous building was the Temple of Diana, dedicated to the worship of erotica. A church had been planted in the city of Ephesus. Though it had been started and led by wonderful teachers, Paul entrusted to Timothy the responsibility of correcting some of its internal challenges.

In this letter Paul reminds Timothy of the need for clear biblical teaching. He exhorts Timothy on the importance of public worship and the priority of prayer and preaching. He also offers practical guidelines on identifying the leaders whom the Holy Spirit chooses in each church, and how to bring them into the place of service and leadership that the Spirit intends.

In the middle of his letter Paul gives to Timothy a wonderful description of the church. Paul's words, found in 1 Timothy 3:14-16, are a helpful antidote to those who think the church is merely a hangover from the past and irrelevant for today. Furthermore, Paul's concerns in this passage are not simply about how we are to behave in a church service - sit quietly, stay awake, speak in low tones, don't smile, don't criticize the preacher (though I wish he had said that!). Rather, his intent is to show how significant the church is as a body. The church is not a building, despite the common idea that the church has something to do with a building. The church is people. The only visible church the New Testament recognizes consists of people who have been rescued by Jesus, born from above by the Holy Spirit, and called to gather together under Christ in order to manifest His love and grace in a local context.

Paul uses two phrases to describe the church: "the household of God" and "the church of the living God." The church, God's people, is God's house (cf. Hebrews 3:6). God dwells with us and lives within us. When we gather together, we should sense His presence and purpose dramatically.

We are also "the church of the living God." That phrase was probably intended as a direct contrast with the idolatrous Temple of Diana. Legend holds that an unusually shaped meteorite had fallen from the sky bearing the resemblance of a woman. They built a temple around it, began worshiping it, and calling it, "Diana of the Ephesians." The church is not like that. We do not worship a lifeless rock. We serve the living God. Nothing is more frustrating than to see the people of God, who serve the living God, functioning like a dead relic.

Paul goes on to describe the role of the church in two powerful words: the church is the "pillar" and the "buttress" of the truth. We exist to declare truth in a world saturated with error. We live in a confused world and it's getting more confused all the time. We are called to speak the truth because truth is so radically different from the confusion all around us.

The church is the pillar of the truth. Ancient temples had massive pillars, several feet thick, that supported them. The church is the support of the truth. The church's role is to proclaim the truth about who God is, what's wrong with humanity and how we can be in a right relationship with the living God. The church exists to declare who we are and what God has made us to do. The church is the pillar, the support, the defense, and the buttress of the truth. The church recovers truth when it is lost. That is why any spiritual and moral recovery in our country begins with the people of God. If there is to be any halt to our downhill slide into despair it lies in the church of the living God.

This passage emphasizes tragedy of a biblically illiterate church. Sadly, so many people who claim to be following Jesus do not know the Bible. The Bible is not being taught. It is not being opened in helpful and compelling ways. People are just given surface truths or self-help tips that are devoid of power. There is little effort made to study, teach and dig deeper in order to understand the world in which we live.

Our calling is to be "the pillar and buttress of the truth." The Apostle Paul understood that the church was sent into the world to make a difference. He exhorts Timothy in this letter to help the Christians in Ephesus understand the truth that is not only an objective revelation but also a Person named Jesus:

He was manifested in the flesh,  
vindicated by the Spirit,  
seen by angels,  
proclaimed among the nations,  
believed on in the world,  
taken up in glory.

*The church is not a building, despite the common idea that the church has something to do with a building. The church is people. The only visible church the New Testament recognizes consists of people who have been rescued by Jesus, born from above by the Holy Spirit, and called to gather together under Christ in order to manifest His love and grace in a local context.*

## WHAT WE BELIEVE

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

\*The Statement of Faith of the National Association of Evangelicals.

## STEP SIX . . .

### EXPLORING the passage through discussion

1. Verse 15 makes reference to how we ought to *behave* in the household of God. What kind of behavior is Paul talking about?
2. What does it mean for the church to be the household of God? How is the church like a family?
3. What does it mean for the church to be the assembly of the living God? How should this reality show up in our own experience?
4. What does it mean for the church to be the pillar and buttress of the church? What is your responsibility in this?





## THE MISSION OF LOUDONVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH

We are committed to reaching and teaching people to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ, connecting them to one another and sending them to serve their families, communities and world.

### 10 CORE BELIEFS OF A DISCIPLE

#### **Authority of the Bible** *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

#### **The Godhead** *2 Corinthians 13:14*

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

#### **The Deity and Sinlessness of Christ** *Colossians 2:9*

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life.

#### **The Sufficient Atonement of Christ** *2 Corinthians 5:19-21*

We believe in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood.

#### **The Resurrection and Return of Christ** *Acts 1:3, 9-11*

We believe in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

#### **Salvation By Grace** *Ephesians 2:8-9*

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential and that a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

#### **The Ministry of the Holy Spirit** *John 14:16*

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

#### **Unity in Christ** *Ephesians 2:14-17*

We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **Eternity** *Revelation 21:22-27*

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

#### **Stewardship** *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

We believe that everything we have or own belongs to God.

### 10 CORE PRACTICES OF A DISCIPLE

#### **Undiluted Worship** *Matthew 22:37-40*

Loving the Lord God with all of our physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual vigor and, my neighbor as myself.

#### **Constant Abiding** *John 15:1-11*

Abiding in Christ in order to be faithful and bear fruit.

#### **Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

Reading the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for daily life.

#### **Desperate Prayer** *Psalms 66:16-20*

Praying to God to know Him, laying requests before Him and, finding direction for daily life.

#### **Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

Fellowshipping with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, other people's lives and, in the world.

#### **Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

Using my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

#### **Total Forgiveness** *Ephesians 4:30*

Practicing forgiving others as God has forgiven me in Christ.

#### **Tangible Compassion** *Matthew 25:31-46*

Showing compassion to those in need and so minister to Jesus Himself.

#### **Generous Giving** *2 Corinthians 8:7*

Giving away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

#### **God Space** *Ephesians 6:19-20*

Increasing the quantity and quality of our gospel conversations.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES OF A DISCIPLE

### **Love - a sincere affection for others** *1 John 4:10-12*

Love is acting in someone else's interest no matter who they may be, no matter how you feel, and no matter what it costs.

### **Joy - a delight unaffected by circumstances** *John 15:11*

An inner delight in God that is sustained in spite of the changing seasons of life.

### **Peace - an abiding sense of harmony** *Philippians 4:6-7*

Relationships are free from friction. Positively, it describes harmonious relations with others in the church.

### **Patience - a willingness to stick with things** *Proverbs 3:3-4*

Being willing to live with a difficult situation for a long time—even if things are slow to change or never change.

### **Kindness - a sense of compassion in the heart** *Job 6:14*

An inner disposition that puts others at ease and out of which kind actions flow.

### **Goodness - a goodness that flows outwardly** *1 Thess. 5:15*

Choosing to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Faithfulness - an unwavering loyalty** *Psalm 26:3*

Being the kind of people who keep our word to one another.

### **Gentleness/Humility - an attitude of humility without any entitlement; a lack of self-awareness** *Philippians 4:5; 2:3-4*

Gentleness is power and strength under God's control.

Humility is considering others above myself, if I consider myself at all.

### **Self-Control - an ability to direct your energy wisely**

*Titus 2:11-13*

The strength to restrain our desires, emotions, and actions has to come from within rather than from some outside source.

### **Hope - a certainty of what is to come** *Hebrews 6:19-20*

Coping with the hardships of life and with death because of hope in Christ.

Each week this Bible Study will feature either a core belief, practice or virtue vital for growing disciples.



**# OT in 52**  
(52 weeks through the Old Testament)

**OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE READING IN A YEAR**

Monday, March 7 thru Saturday, March 12  
Numbers 18-20, 21-22, 23-25, 26-27, 28-30, 31

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