

Dr. Robert Yarbrough, Pastoral Epistles, Session 1, Introduction - The Pastoral Epistles: Apostolic Instruction for Pastoral Leaders and Their Followers, 6-min. Video Overview

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Imagine you got your hands on a leadership manual, one that's 2,000 years old, and it was written for a young leader dropped into one of the most chaotic cities in the entire Roman Empire. Well, today, we're diving into three short letters in the New Testament: 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. Together, they're known as the pastoral epistles, and wow, are they packed with some serious instruction for leaders and the people they're leading.

But here's the twist. For the last 200 years or so, a huge academic debate has been raging over one single question. Who actually wrote these things? Are they the real, authentic words of the Apostle Paul to his trusted protégés? Or are they a sophisticated later forgery? Let's dig in and look at the evidence.

But before we get into all the detective work, we've got to zoom out. We need to see where these letters fit on the map of the entire biblical story. You know, without the big picture, all the details can kind of get lost in the noise.

So Dr. Robert Yarbrough gives us his really helpful way to look at it: an acronym, P-M-E-E-C. It kicks off with P for preparation. That's the whole Old Testament, setting the stage.

Then you've got M for manifestation, the Gospels, where the Messiah shows up. Next is E for expansion. That's the book of Acts, where the church just explodes across the Roman world.

And our letters, the pastorals, they fall right into that second E, explanation. They basically answer the question, okay, so now what? How are we supposed to actually live this out? And it all wraps up with C for consummation, in the book of Revelation. The main thing to get is that these letters are the practical, on-the-ground guidance for the early church.

Okay, so now that we've got our bearings, let's tackle that 200-year-old question head-on. Did the Apostle Paul, this towering figure of early Christianity, really write these letters to his guys, Timothy and Titus? Well, for almost 1800 years, nobody even questioned it. The consensus in the church was solid.

Paul wrote them. End of story. But then in 1805, a German theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher, was the first to raise some serious red flags.

And by the middle of the 19th century, his skeptical view had become the dominant, historical-critical approach in a lot of Western universities. And it basically argues that Paul did not write them. So what are the arguments? Well, the skeptical view points out that the writing style and some of the vocabulary just feel different from Paul's other letters.

You know, like Romans or Corinthians. They say it points to a different author. They also argue that the events he's talking about don't quite fit into the timeline of Paul's life we see in the book of Acts.

But on the other hand, the traditional view makes a pretty straightforward case. The letters themselves say they're from Paul. And for almost 2,000 years, the early church writers, who, by the way, were native Greek speakers and way closer to the source, never questioned it.

The scholar whose work we're leaning on here, Dr. Yarbrough, ultimately lands on the traditional side of things. He basically argues that the historical consensus of the church carries a lot of weight. He says, quote, I would rather side with the first 1,800 years of people who read these books and thought Paul wrote them.

But, you know, regardless of who is actually holding the pen, to really get why these letters were written, we have to understand the city at the heart of this whole story, Ephesus. And let me tell you, this place was wild. Just picture a massive, bustling port city.

A total hub of commerce and culture. I mean, this was the home of the Temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Dr. Yarbrough even calls it the Disney World of the Roman Empire.

It was a destination that people traveled from all over the known world to see. But this ancient metropolis had a really dark side. Ephesus was infamous, and I mean infamous, throughout the empire as a center for the occult.

We're talking magic, sorcery, the black arts, demonic practices. This stuff was woven right into the fabric of the culture. And to give you a sense of the scale here, the Book of Acts tells this incredible story about how when people in Ephesus became Christians, they brought their magic scrolls, their books of spells and sorcery, and had a massive public book burning.

The total value of all those scrolls was calculated at 50,000 drachmas. That was an absolute fortune. It just shows you how deeply the occult was embedded in that city, both financially and culturally.

So it's really no wonder that when Paul wrote another letter to this exact same church, he gave them this famous warning. He knew the kind of intense spiritual conflict they were dealing with every single day. Leading a church in a city like Ephesus was not a job for the faint of heart.

So, you've got this high-stakes city. And right in the middle of it all, you have a mentor writing to his protégé. This isn't just some dry academic text.

It's a deeply personal message between two people who had literally been through the fire together. So who was this Timothy guy? He was Paul's trusted right-hand man. He was a young leader with a Jewish mom and a Greek dad, and he was already a seasoned veteran of some really difficult missionary work.

In fact, Timothy's name shows up in 10 of Paul's 13 letters in the New Testament. They shared this profound bond, one that wasn't forged in a classroom, but out in the trenches,

whether in persecution and suffering together for their message. All right, so we've looked at the controversy.

We felt the intense vibe of the city. But what are these letters actually about? If we look past all the debates and the crazy background, what's the core message here? You know, sometimes a simple word count can be incredibly revealing. In 1 Timothy, the author doesn't talk much about church structure or sociology or even conflict.

The most frequent significant word is God. Then come faith, good, Christ, and Jesus. The focus again and again and again is on God and on trusting him right through the middle of all the difficulties.

And this focus on trust leads to this really unique and powerful phrase that you find five times in these letters. In the original Greek, it's *Lagos Pistos*, which means faithful is the word or this is a trustworthy saying. It's like the author is putting a stamp of certainty on these core teachings.

In a world full of magic and myths and all these competing philosophies, this phrase was like a declaration. This is what you can build your life on. This is reliable.

You can take this to the bank. So these ancient letters written for a leader in a chaotic world, they just keep coming back to this idea of a faithful saying. And that leaves us with a question for our own time, doesn't it? In our modern world, just flooded with endless information and competing stories, what makes a message truly trustworthy? What, for us, is a faithful saying?