

# 1 TIMOTHY

Lesson 5 w/ Answers

1 Timothy 4:1-16

In this lesson, Paul warns Timothy (and us) about the importance of maintaining and defending the truth. Paul charges Timothy with the responsibility for keeping false teaching, heresies, and fables from distorting the truth of the Gospel. The nineteenth-century theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher defined heresy as "that which preserved the appearance of Christianity and yet contradicted its essence." That is the true danger of false teaching—it has the appearance of being correct, but in actuality is a complete lie.

Paul completes this section of his letter by showing Timothy that if Timothy points out these false teachings, he will be a "good minister of Christ Jesus." Paul then spells out to Timothy his various roles in leading the followers of Christ in Ephesus, and why his role as a leader in the work at Ephesus is especially important.

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## ***Read 1 Timothy 4:1-16 and consider the following:***

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1. Do you think that people who are followers of Christ intentionally follow the teachings of demons and deceiving spirits? What does the story of Adam and Eve show us about this question?
  - a. ANSWER 1: Like any sin, the beginning always has the appearance of innocence. After all, Eve was just curious, wasn't she? The problem was that she was already disobeying God by questioning his command, thereby providing the opportunity for Satan to step in—who, by bending and misquoting God's Word, led her into sin.
  - b. ANSWER 2: We always need to be on the alert. Satan comes into the church body disguised as a religious person, a "Christian," in order to gain our trust. He seeks out those who have a desire to learn teaching that goes beyond—or even takes precedence over—God's word. Our Christian community is full of these people—those who would teach lies and deception, and those who will listen and follow them.
2. Read the following verses and note what they teach us:
  - a. Matthew 7:15
    - i. ANSWER: Beware of false prophets. They come innocently, but their desire is to consume you as a wolf consumes a sheep.
  - b. Jeremiah 23:16
    - i. ANSWER: False prophets and false teachers fill you with false hope, speaking from their minds and their personal motives.
  - c. Ezekiel 22:7
    - i. ANSWER: We see from this verse that the motives for false teaching are many, including destroying lives and going after dishonest gain. How often have we seen this in churches when people sow discord for personal gain, vendettas, and political agendas? Paul warns us about these people.
  - d. John 10:12
    - i. ANSWER: This verse speaks to the importance of having a true born-again believer appointed by God as the shepherd in each local church. Otherwise, the leader will scatter the moment trouble arrives; and the local church can then be devoured or destroyed.
  - e. Acts 20:29
    - i. ANSWER: Paul knew that wolves were at the door waiting for him to leave. Similarly, we need to be aware as well; because Satan's wolves are always at the door.
  - f. Romans 16:17-18
    - i. ANSWER: This is a clear warning by Paul to avoid people who create divisions and obstacles. Avoid them and their teaching. They cannot be a part of the church. They are serving "their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the minds of naive people."
  - g. 2 Timothy 3:5
    - i. ANSWER: False teachers are tricky; they can have a "form of righteousness" that can fool us into believing them. Be careful and watch for these false teachers.
  - h. 2 Peter 2:1
    - i. ANSWER: John tells us not to "believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God." He, like Peter and Paul, warns us that "many false prophets have gone out into the world."

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Paul cautioned Timothy about the false teaching and bad doctrine of the day that was threatening the church at Ephesus. It included the spiritual warfare between the followers of Christ in Ephesus and the followers of the Goddess Diana/Artemis.

This Goddess was held in high esteem throughout the Roman Empire, and was in effect headquartered in Ephesus where a large temple had been built to honor her. Accordingly, many Ephesians made a good living supporting the worship of her, including the making and selling of idols in her likeness.

The practice of child sacrifice was also prevalent, and the Nicolaitans were spreading doctrine in the area which taught that sex, idol worship, and drugs were all an integral part of worshipping Christ. They did this based on scripture that proclaimed that all of our sins had been forgiven; so therefore it was okay for Christians to do these things in worship—but not the pagan unbelievers who were still in a sinful state. This was certainly appealing to many; and it made Christianity look very similar to the worship practices of the followers of Artemis.

In 1 Timothy 4:3, Paul warned Timothy that people were teaching others not to marry and which foods they could, and could not, eat. These teachings came from the Gnostics who claimed to have special "inside" knowledge of more than just the scripture. Between the practices of worshipping Artemis, and the influence of the Gnostics, the Judaizers, and the Nicolaitans, you can see how intense the attacks were on the new church at Ephesus.

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3. Years later, presumably while living there, John would write the book of Revelation, and record Jesus' letters to the seven churches. As recorded in Revelation 2:1-7, what did Jesus say about the church at Ephesus, some thirty or so years after its inception?
  - a. ANSWER: Jesus commended them for their hard work and perseverance. He knew their wariness of wicked people, and that they tested anyone who came along claiming to be an apostle of Christ. He also commended them for their hatred of the "practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate." In doing so, they had endured hardships and had grown weary from the battle. But now he found that they were in effect backsliding, and he is calling them to return to their "first love," i.e., their love of the Gospel message.
4. While all of this is true and informative for us, how does it apply to our lives and the church today? We no longer have idols that we worship, or temples that we build to them, or profit from their worship...right? How is Paul's teaching to Timothy relevant today? What idols do we have, what false teachings are out there, and how is sound doctrine being attacked and compromised today? We need to be mindful of these things in order to protect ourselves and our local church from falling prey to the schemes of the devil who "prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8) Jot down below some of the dangers that church doctrine faces today.
  - b. ANSWER 1: Like the churches in Asia Minor in Paul's day, we have the same evil influences on our beliefs and teachings today. Divination, fortune telling, horoscopes, mediums who talk to the dead, and the like, are more popular than ever today; and they are widely accepted. Perhaps our biggest idol of the day is money, wealth, and the perquisites of "success." These have clearly crept into the teaching and thinking of the church and are to be avoided at all costs; but the influence of wealth, success, and social status all have such a strong pull, that this is difficult to avoid.
  - c. ANSWER 2: Similarly, promiscuous lives and lifestyles result in couples who never marry but live in sin without guilt, expecting the church to turn their eyes and look the other way, and many churches do. Sexual perversion in a variety of ways is also confronting the church; and it is expected to be accepted, and many churches do.
  - d. ANSWER 3: Furthermore, false teachings tell us that God is a God of love and won't actually punish sin, nor send anyone into a place as evil as Hell. The success gospel panders to man's desire for money and happiness through worldly pleasures. There are also beliefs that Jesus isn't the "only" son of God, i.e., that God had other sons, or that Jesus wasn't actually born of a virgin, or that Jesus never actually died on the cross, and so on. All of these are prevalent today, along with a wide variety of restrictions on food you can or cannot eat.
  - e. ANSWER 4: Finally, as a society we watch television shows and movies, and read books that lift up this compromised lifestyle as validation that it is correct. They depict the Biblical lifestyle as "prudish" and "narrow minded," making the followers of Christ appear to be the evil ones. And, as Paul teaches in many of his letters, false teachings will only get worse and more prevalent as we approach the Second Coming of Christ. Being on guard, protecting the truth, and keeping the Gospel pure, is a charge Paul gives Timothy—and it is a charge that he gives each of us as well.
5. Based on the need for a solid defense of the truth in the battle against false teaching, what does Paul instruct Timothy to do in 1 Timothy 4:6?
  - a. ANSWER: He tells Timothy to "point these things out to the brothers and sisters," and he tells Timothy that if he will do this then he will be a good "minister of Christ."

6. We can also see from 1 Tim. 4:6 that to be a good minister of Christ we need to be aware of false teaching and false teachers; so that we, like Timothy, are able to "point these things out to the brothers and sisters." It is as much our responsibility to defend the truth as it is for any leader within the church. All of us must guard against a level of corruption that turns lies into "truths" within the church. In 1 Timothy 4:7, what does Paul tell Timothy, and us, that we are specifically to do?
- ANSWER: We are to "have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales," and in fact we are instructed to "train yourself to be godly." This is our responsibility today; for how can we know when a teaching or a person is false? I suggest to you that we cannot, unless we avoid godless speculations and old wives' tales and train ourselves by seeking out sound teaching.
7. Continuing from 1 Tim. 4:7, Paul then concludes this section with specific instructions to Timothy, instructions that are equally as valid for us today. He reminds us in 1 Timothy 4:10 that our hope is in the "living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe." List below the things he instructs Timothy to do, and by inference what we should also be doing:
- ANSWER 1: Because we have put our hope in Christ, we are to labor and strive for the spread of the Gospel.
  - ANSWER 2: We should not let our age dictate our behavior or our message. We all should realize that God put each of us here to protect and proclaim the Gospel, regardless of whether we are youthful like Timothy, or Paul's age, or even much older. God has led us to the here and now, so let us be faithful in carrying out our individual work.
  - ANSWER 3: You are to "devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture," and in using your gifts of ministry. We are not to neglect whatever spiritual gifts God has given us.
  - ANSWER 4: We are to do these things, and to conduct ourselves, "in love, in faith and in purity."
  - ANSWER 5: You are to "watch your life and doctrine closely;" because when you do, you will "save both yourself and your hearers."

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As we move forward in our walk with Christ, let us redouble our efforts to weed out false teachers and false doctrine, being sure to keep the logic and wisdom of man' separate from the wisdom of God. We live in a fallen and compromised world, just as Timothy did. Paul's warnings to Timothy cry out to us today as well. By keeping the Gospel pure and untainted by the world, many will be saved. So let' commit to being a part of that work in His Kingdom, as we live our lives for Christ.

*"We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God." 2 Corinthians 10:5a*

In Christ,

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