

# 1 TIMOTHY

## October 9, 2022

### 1 Timothy 1:3-7

<sup>3</sup> As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, <sup>4</sup> nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. <sup>5</sup> **The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.** <sup>6</sup> Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, <sup>7</sup> desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions. <sup>1</sup>

Normally when Paul writes a letter he softly enters into the topic with a verse or two of thanksgiving. Yet in this letter to the pastor Timothy, following his salutation, he jumps directly into the topic at hand.

Now, let me ask you...fellow church members and many who have been in Sunday school for years and have heard dozens of sermons in your lives...when you hear the term “false teacher” in a religious setting what or who comes to mind?

It may be a teacher from a totally different world religion. Maybe a New Age philosopher, and extremist, or even one of the leaders of neo-atheism?

Perhaps, a leader from a religious cult like Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, Charles Taze Russell, or L. Ron Hubbard comes to mind. Or perhaps the more extreme examples of Charles Manson, Jim Jones, or David Koresh are at the front of the line for you.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Ti 1:3–7). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

But...when Paul references the false teachers negatively impacting the church in Ephesus, he is not speaking of those who are outside the church, but of those inside the room, inside the family, who are like family.

Thus, the letter.

And since God's Word is never irrelevant, we see this letter as needed now more than ever, in an era where so many voices are speaking and the allure of "deeper teaching" becomes the draw for many.

And the church suffers. Not necessarily in numbers for there are a good number of churches with thousands in the room, multiple campuses, and franchised ministries that would be successful by any modern business metric, but suffering from the Ephesian issue. And if you think small church means healthy church, don't buy that either. For there are many smaller churches that face the very same issues of Timothy's church today as well. Health is godliness is not graded by typical four Bs that most churches today use to judge success – baptisms, buildings, budgets, and "bottoms" in the chairs.

God gives us clear warnings about the dangers of ignoring the details in this letter. Therefore, the wise should take to heart what the Word says.

## **CALLING OUT**

There are two types of evangelical Christians in our nation today. Well, there are more than two, but I'm not talking about doctrine at this point. I'm just talking attitude. There are the nice Christians you meet in person, that shake your hand, smile, and seem so welcoming.

Then there are the online versions – on Twitter and Facebook mostly. For these kindness is abandoned and anger is their fuel. These are the people who could read a post by someone that says "We're having nice weather today" and respond with something that says "Only a neo-pagan with woke theology believing CRT is good, with empty doctrine and

patriarchal leanings would declare that anything in this sin-sick, Satan-serving society filled with depraved wretches who have stolen the rainbow, voted wrong, sat for the national anthem, cheered for professional sports teams, watched a sitcom and enjoyed it, ever laughed in public, thinking things are jokes, played Bethel music in a church building, and streamed church services online and let a woman speak in the church building would say such drivel. God bless you.”

And...sometimes those two Christians are the same person.

Thus, in an attempt to not be the jerk that is so obviously present in our little religious sub-culture, many have sought to just be nice. Now, being nice is not wrong, but in an attempt to be nice to all and to COEXIST with everyone, some have abandoned the role of actually lovingly and for the sake of the gospel, calling out those in their midst who are wrong.

Wrong teaching left unaddressed never leads to truth. It always leads to moderate or liberal beliefs. And this is so hard to address in a culture that cannot even think of the words liberal and conservative without going to American politics. Many self-proclaimed liberals cannot truly define what they are liberating and likewise many conservatives cannot express that which they should be conserving, without running through bullet-points defined by political parties, news media, or political action groups.

Don't get me wrong, those topics are important and not to be ignored, but within the church the liberalization and conservatism as it relates to biblical fidelity is much more important and essential for the follower of Christ. It is one thing to say “We believe the Bible is true” and to be able to explain why and how.

Therefore, Paul is telling Timothy to call out the false teachers. He is not saying be a jerk about it, but it is clear that there is no equivocation when it comes to the task. Call them out. Call them by name. Call them

out so that they may repent. Remove them from teaching. Remove them from leadership. Remove them from influence for their influence is going to kill the church.

That's the calling out.

And Paul warned this would happen.

If you were with us when we went through the book of Acts, you may remember Paul's time in Ephesus (where Timothy is pastor.) The church in this city was birthed in a challenging time. Paul stayed in the city for a time during his second journey. He taught in the synagogue and then in the hall of Tyrannus. His ministry was powerful. Lives were changed. People saved. There was a riot of idol-makers in the city that came due to the church's influence. The church was birthed and became essential to the reaching of the world. As Paul left Ephesus, he shared this warning:

### **Acts 20:25-31**

**<sup>25</sup> And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again.**

**<sup>26</sup> Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, <sup>27</sup> for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. <sup>28</sup> Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. <sup>29</sup> I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. <sup>31</sup> Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. <sup>2</sup>**

He called it.

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<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ac 20:25–31). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Like wolves the enemy has infiltrated the family. Now, the letter to the under-shepherd to call out these wolves. Paul modeled this by removing Hymenaeus and Alexander from the church, as we will see in a few weeks.

It may not seem nice to call them out, but in this case it is essential.

## **CORRECTING DOCTRINE**

Years ago, I read an article that said that doctrine was what people were looking for in a church – good doctrine, solid doctrine, biblical doctrine. I wanted to believe that was true and by and large, I believe it is, but I’m not sure that in an era of attractional Christianity that doctrine is something people are consciously seeking.

Now, kids ministries, youth events, women’s gatherings, men’s retreats, music styles, funny pastors, etc. – those seem to be more of what people are looking for, if you believe the social media posts and things offered by many churches in our culture. Yet, even those things seem to be little more than novelties. A crowd can be gathered with these pieces of bait, but eventually...doctrine matters.

What’s funny is that those who look to the superficial things that many Christians seem to be drawn to find themselves in their own little group of like-minded Pharisees. You see, the flip side of fluffy, attractional church stuff is the equally wrong “going deeper” group that complains they aren’t being fed.

One end of the spectrum is empty, prosperity-driven, verse of the day, Christian mindfulness with a goal of “best life now” emoting and on the other end is the dry, super-critical, echo-chamber club of study group junkies.

**charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, <sup>4</sup> nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.**

This is not a condemnation to those who love to do family tree research. It does allude to the unhealthy obsession that Latter-day Saints have with such, however. Yet, in this era, the teachers were influenced by extra-biblical books such as *The Book of Jubilees* and the *Biblical Antiquities of Philo*. These were fanciful retellings of Old Testament stories with what we would call today “artistic license” added.

In the synagogues the rabbis were called “teachers of the law.” These Christian leaders aspired to be new covenant versions. Why? Because others would look up to them. They desired esteem and power. As these types of leaders increase influence, they decrease the impact of the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

Unlike Judaizers who were influencing the other early churches such as the one in Galatia, these people were, as John Stott states “*speculators. They treated the law as a happy hunting ground for their speculations.*”

They likely did not set out to be heretics. They simply wanted to “go deeper” into scripture. A respectable desire, not unlike many have today.

Christians in our nation and culture today are drawn to such things. For example, some base their understanding of biblical truth on such writings as:

- *Left Behind*
- *The Bible Code*
- *The Harbinger*
- *Jesus Calling*
- *Heaven is for Real*
- *90 Minutes in Heaven*
- *Your Best Life Now*
- *The Prayer of Jabez*
- *The Circle Maker*

For those who don’t like to read as much, they gain their insight from questionable podcasts, YouTube clips, and many faith-based films.

Not all are bad, mind you, but none are **the** Word of God.

The study of God's Word is vital as it is alive and active and sharper than a two-edged sword.

The "go deeper" crowd isn't always wrong either. I would say that when the church is not enough to the point a parachurch group is sought to fill the gaps, we have problems. Book studies are not bad either, but when more emphasis is placed on a book explaining THE BOOK than THE BOOK itself, we have problems.

Doctrine matters. Even for those who say "I just want practical advice" doctrine matters. It matters severely.

### **CHARGING FORWARD**

**<sup>5</sup> The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.**

Good doctrine without **love** IS NOT good doctrine.

Good doctrine without a **pure heart** IS NOT good doctrine.

Good doctrine without a **good conscience** IS NOT good doctrine.

Good doctrine without a **sincere faith** IS NOT good doctrine.

Timothy was charged to move forward into a very difficult and uncomfortable confrontation. It would not be easy. It would be right. It would be needed. And he would not deal with this in his own power. Church, we are called to the very same today. We cannot ignore such heresies just so we can be called nice. In love, with a pure heart, and good conscience, and sincere faith, we must stand firm in the faith. Doctrine matters because truth matters. Truth matters because God is truth.

The church is perpetually moving forward, correcting drift, and aligning itself with the already given, inerrant, never changing, absolute truth of God. May we be found faithful.