

DEAR TIMOTHY "The Danger of Strange Doctrine" 1 Timothy 1:3-11

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Authority of the Bible I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

"All Scripture is Godbreathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

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2 Timothy 3:16-17 is a key text related to the doctrine of inspiration, especially verse 16. Paul tells Timothy, "All Scripture is God-breathed." Other English versions translate the Greek word theoneustos (rendered "God-breathed" in the NIV) "inspired." For example, "All Scripture is inspired by God" (GNT, HCSB, NET, NLT, NASB), and "All Scripture is given by inspiration" (KJV, NKJV, GNV, AMP). While some believe that inspiration pertains to the writers of the biblical texts - for example, that Paul was inspired while writing of the book of Romansand others believe that it pertains to the readers of the biblical text – for example, that readers are inspired while reading of the book of Romansinspiration actually pertains to the biblical text itself. The ESV makes this perfectly clear in its translation, "All Scripture is breathed out by God." Writers and readers are not "breathed out by God." One theologian writes: "Our English word 'inspire' carries the idea of breathing into something. But this word tells us that God breathed out something, namely, the Scripture. To be sure, human authors wrote the texts, but the Bible originated as an action of God who breathed it out" (Charles C. Ryrie, Basic Theology, 78).

However, while the Bible expresses God's message to us, we must interpret the Bible correctly in order to get his message. And clearly, the meaning of biblical texts can be misunderstood in the same way the meaning of other written texts can be misunderstood. So wherein lies the meaning of a text? Does it lie with the author – texts mean what their authors intend them to mean? Does it lie with the reader – texts mean what their readers construe them to mean? Or does it lie solely with the text – texts mean what they mean apart from their authors and readers? Given our understanding of the doctrine of inspiration and the fact that it is God's message "composed and recorded" by the human authors of the Bible that we're after, it follows that the meaning of any biblical text is the author's intended meaning expressed in the words of the text. So our goal as readers is to recognize that meaning, which we do through a process of *active reading*, illustrated in this reading guide. What's more, our goal as teachers of the Bible is to teach that meaning. Why? Because God's authoritative message is expressed in it.

All of this implies there's a difference between telling the truth and teaching the Bible. Bible teaching involves unpacking the author's intended meaning along with its necessary practical implications. However, a teacher can tell the truth without doing this, either by addressing a subject entirely outside the scope of the text or, put differently, by teaching right doctrine from the wrong text. Nowadays, some teachers use the biblical text as a pretext for giving what they deem good "self-improvement" kinds of advice without ever addressing its meaning. Others don't bother with the text; they just deliver their advice in a sanctified setting.

Something akin to this was going on in Ephesus. Paul directs Timothy, whom he urged to remain there (1Ti 1:3), to command misguided teachers of house churches to cease and desist (v. 3). Their teachings amounted to nothing more than "meaningless talk" (v. 6). We might call it gibberish, prattle, or claptrap. One commentator calls them "an ignorant group of idle tale-tellers" with Jewish roots, who "weaned the minds of their listeners away from the simplicity of the gospel, and in doing this they missed both the truths of the Old Testament and the teaching of Christ" (Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., 1, 2 Timothy, Titus, NAC, 69). Theirs was a failure to emphasize what the writers of Scripture emphasized, and to, instead, emphasize something else entirely. The heart of the problem then remains the heart of the problem today.

EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

3 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer 4 or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work – which is by faith. 5 The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. 6 Some have departed from these and have turned to meaningless talk. 7 They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

8 We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. 9 We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, 10 for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers – and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine 11 that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 3.
- Underline "false doctrines," "myths," and "endless genealogies" in v. 4.
- Circle "controversial speculations" in v. 4.
- Circle "this" in v. 5.
- Bracket "pure heart," "good conscience," and "sincere faith" in v. 5.
- Underline "meaningless talk" in v. 6.
- Circle "the law" in vv. 7, 8, 9.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 9.
- Bracket "kill their fathers or mothers" in v. 9.
- Bracket "those practicing homosexuality" in v. 10.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Apparently, Timothy was prepared to leave Ephesus, but Paul urged him to stay. How come?

2. How would you describe what some were teaching?

3. Why did Paul object to it?

4. Is anything like what was being taught then being taught now? Explain.

5. To what does "this" refer in verse 5?

6. Describe the three-fold source of love – the soil in which it grows.

7. What some were teaching amounted to "meaningless talk." How so?

8. Explain the *irony* in verse 7.

9. In a word, if the law is not made for the *righteous*, who is it made for? Talk, too, about the relationship of Paul's list of vices to the Ten Commandments.

10. **Discussion:** Talk about contemporary examples of what Paul decried.

Commentary On The Text

First, regarding the setting of 1 Timothy 1:3-11, the book of Acts closes with Paul under house arrest in Rome (Ac 28:30-31). What we know about his movements after that time comes mainly from allusions in his letters and conjectures. According to one commentator, "Following his trial before Caesar and his acquittal, Paul evidently left Rome. He made his way eastward and eventually arrived in Ephesus. While in Ephesus, Paul doubtless visited other churches in the area, and later set out for Macedonia - probably for other provinces - intending to continue his pioneer missionary work (cf. Rom. 15:24-28). When Paul departed from Ephesus, he left Timothy in charge, as his special representative, to continue the work there (1 Tim. 1:3). Sometime after that, Timothy evidently wrote to Paul, probably asking if he could leave Ephesus, perhaps to rejoin Paul. Paul responded with this letter, in which he instructed Timothy to remain in Ephesus, and to continue his needed ministry - until Paul could rejoin him there (3:14; 4:13)" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on 1 Timothy," 2020 ed., 2, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/ notes/pdf/1tim.pdf). Regarding the challenge Timothy faced in Ephesus (1Ti 1:3), the same commentator explains: "Paul penned these opening words to remind Timothy to correct the teachers in the Ephesian church who were majoring on minor matters in their Bible teaching" (Constable, 15).

So what was going on in Ephesus? Paul describes the problem in verses 3-7. Evidently, some teachers in the house churches in and around Ephesus were "spreading false teachings" (NET); they were teaching "other doctrines" that were essentially different from what the apostles taught (cf., 6:3). Apparently, these other teachings had a Jewish flavor, as indicated by Paul's reference to "myths and endless genealogies" (1:4) and the desire of these individuals "to be teachers of the law" (v. 6). Perhaps they became enamored with a Jewish practice, which involved developing fictitious stories about the famous people mentioned in Old Testament genealogies. Here is an example of a story about Abram from the Book of Jubilees: "And the seed time came for the sowing of seed upon the land, and they all went forth together to protect their seed against the ravens, and Abram went forth with those that went, and the child was a lad of fourteen years. And a cloud of ravens came to devour the seed, and Abram ran to meet them before they settled on the ground, and cried to them before they settled on the ground to devour the seed, and said, 'Descend not: return to the place whence ye came,' and they proceeded to turn back. And he caused the clouds of ravens to turn back that day seventy times, and of all the ravens throughout all the land where Abram was there settled there not so much as one. And all who were with him throughout all the land saw him cry out, and all the ravens turn back, and his name became great in all the land of the Chaldees" (11.18-20, pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/11htm). In a nutshell, it wasn't that they were teaching another gos-

pel, which would matter. It was that they were teaching other things, which didn't matter at all. They wandered from "a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" and toward "meaningless talk," namely, controversial speculations that amounted to nothing more than nonsense – empty gibberish that contributed not at all the to spiritual growth of its hearers. Their teaching was not motivated by unselfish love but rather by blind ambition. They aspired to be "teachers of the law." How ironic as one commentator explains: "It is ironic that the same people whose speech is empty 'want to be teachers' (v. 7) and that those who repudiate love, a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith want to be teachers 'of the law.' The irony continues in verse 7 with the statement that they do not comprehend either what they are talking about or what they are asserting with great confidence" (Walter L. Liefeld, The NIV Application Commentary: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 56).

These would-be teachers of the law were not using the law properly, as Paul explains in verses 8-11. The ESV captures his play on words: "Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully," which they were not doing, for the law was made for the unrighteous and not "for the righteous" (v. 9). Put differently, the law was not intended to be used as a tool to sanctify the righteous, but rather as a tool to convict the unrighteous. Having turned their attention to myths and endless genealogies in a quest to spin fanciful tales about Old Testament characters, they had turned their attention away from the goal of interpretation, namely, recognizing the intended meaning the Old Testament writers expressed in the words of the text. To make his point, Paul lists different types of unrighteous people. One commentator summarizes: "Paul presented a list of vices that begins with three pairs of adjectives and then follows the order of the Ten Commandments. The three pairs of adjectives refer respectively to moral vagabonds who willfully break the law and refuse to obey its authority ('lawbreakers and rebels'), the outwardly disobedient who wantonly disregard God's will in their lives ('ungodly and sinful'), and the inward scoffers who irreverently trample on God's name ('unholy and irreligious'). The latter group treated nothing as sacred. Those who kill their parents (v. 9) had lost all natural affection and violated the Fifth and Sixth Commandments. 'Murderers' violated the Sixth Commandment, and 'adulterers and perverts' violated the Seventh Commandment. 'Slave traders' disregarded the Eight Commandment, and 'liars and perjurers' sinned against the Ninth Commandment. Paul's list spotlighted easily recognizable external sins. He made no specific mention of the Tenth Commandment prohibiting covetousness" (Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., 1, 2 Timothy, Titus, NAC, 71). The teachers Paul instructed Timothy to censure failed at the main thing, namely, keeping the main thing the main thing. The main thing is captured in a command the apostle would later give his protégé: "Preach the word" (2Tim 4:2).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 3 *false doctrines* Cf., "different doctrine" (ESV). The Greek word, *heterodidaskalein*, "occurs elsewhere only in 1 Tim 6:3, where the following phrase defines it as not adhering 'to the healthy words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that is according to godliness.' In classical Greek, *heteros* meant 'another of a different kind' (LSJ, 701), and *allos* meant 'another of the same kind" . . . The context of 1 Tim 1:3 shows that this old meaning is present here. It is not that the teaching of the opponents was *merely* different; it is that their teaching was *essentially* different and therefore wrong" (William D. Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 46, *Pastoral Epistles*, 19, italics added).

v. 4 *myths* ... I.e., Jewish myths and genealogies. "The lists of bare names in Old Testament genealogies were easily expanded into fictitious histories, supposed to illustrate God's dealings with His people and an example is still preserved to us in the apocalyptic Book of Jubilees. The practice, indeed, was so common that the word 'genealogy' was often used in the sense of mythical history, and this would seem to be its meaning in the present verse" (E. F. Scott, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 8).

v. 4 *speculations* The Greek word, *ekzetesis*, connotes *intellectual speculation* coupled with *controversy*. "It is an extension of a word meaning investigation, controversy, or discussion . . . In 1 Timothy 6:4 a related word (*zetesis*) is paired with 'quarrels about words' and in Titus 3:9 with 'arguments and quarrels.' Therefore, 'controversial speculations' may express the nuance best" (Walter L. Liefeld, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 54).

v. 5 pure . . . faith "In biblical thought the heart is the seat of the mind, the emotions, and the will. Ward portrays it as the seat of religious experience from which moral conduct springs. Any person who lacks a pure heart cannot radiate Christian love . . . Conscience refers to an individual's inner awareness of the moral quality of personal actions . . . In order to develop a good conscience, individuals must fill their minds with God's message and render obedience to it (1 Cor 8:7-12; 1 Pet 3:15-16). 'Sincere faith' is a trust in God that Paul believed Timothy possessed (2 Tim 1:5). Lock characterizes such faith as having simplicity of aim, which is always ready to listen to truth, and a constant desire to do right. Faith is 'sincere' only when it is not mere talk but is genuine trust and confidence in God" (Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., 1, 2 Timothy, Titus, NAC, 68-69).

v. 6 *meaningless talk* I.e., empty, useless, futile, or fruitless talk. "The talk leads nowhere. There is content in what the false teachers propagate, but it does not lead anyone to holy living" (Lea and Griffin, 69).

v. 7 *the law* "The 'Law' is the Mosaic Code – but also the Scriptures of Paul's day, the Old Testament, particularly the legal parts of it" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on 1 Timothy," 2020 ed., 20, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/1timothy.pdf). "The word translated 'teachers of the law' occurs in Luke 5:17, and it describes the great teacher Gamaliel in Acts 5:34. The implication from that and from the context here is that these people wanted to be recognized authorities in the Old Testament, perhaps especially regarding case law applying to the Ten Commandments" (Liefeld, 57).

v. 9 *kill*... "'Father-strikers and mother-strikers' is a better translation than 'those who kill their fathers or mothers.' Such people have no respect or affection for their own parents (cf. Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16; the fifth commandment)" (Constable, 23).

v. 10 practicing homosexuality The Gr. word, arsenokoitai, has been variously translated. See for example: "men who practice homosexuality" (ESV); "sexual perverts" (GNT); "homosexuals" (HCSB); "practicing homosexuals" (NET); "sodomites" (NKJV). More specifically, Paul may have had sexual exploitation in mind. "Other factors in 1 Timothy 1:10 may also support the idea that sexual slavery was the target of the apostle's exhortation since 'kidnappers' (sometimes translated 'slave traders') is listed right after arsenokoitai. In 1 Timothy we find three terms: pornois (translated 'sexually immoral' but derived from pornē, 'prostitute'), arsenokoitai, and andrapodistais ('kidnappers,' 'slave traders'). Placed in order, this could be a grouping of the sexually immoral, or prostitutes, or those who visit prostitutes (e.g., the KJV 'whoremongers'), followed by those who use male prostitutes more specifically or those who sexually exploit others for money, along with traffickers who kidnap and sell human beings for their own gain. Krenkel notes that male prostitutes fetched a higher price than their female counterparts, and when supply ran low 'beautiful boys were captured, imported ... sold ... and prostituted'" (Megan K. DeFranza, "Journeying from the Bible to Christian Ethics in Search of Common Ground," in Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church, Counterpoints, 78-79).

Other Texts to Consider

1 Timothy 4:2

"Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction."



CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Rather than waste your time and the time of others with controversial speculations and meaningless talk, devote yourself to understanding the Scripture and teaching it to others.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)

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3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Our kids are inundated with messages, from the device in their hands to conversations at the cafeteria table to the world at large. Some messages align with scriptural truth being taught at home and church; some make you want to throw up and shelter your little baby from the terrible world out there. Your children are going to be exposed to a world that settles on false doctrine to fit an idea of a false "god." So, what's a parent to do when a child spouts out viewpoints overheard that are contrary to sound Biblical teaching? First of all, don't freak out. Don't react with fear or anger or panic, but instead, react with love. You want your child to know you're a safe place and all conversations and questions are welcome. Secondly, reassure your child that having questions and even doubt is normal in the Christian walk. I mean, you have questions, too, right?! Your kids need to build spiritual muscle and part of that process is wrestling with what they believe. Lastly, what would Jesus do? More often than not, Jesus answered a question with a question, encouraging His listeners to dig into Scripture in order to draw conclusions on their own. With the Bible as your plumb line, seek the answer together. Encourage your child to study God's Word, pursue truth and allow God to speak for Himself. Above all, pray for your child to build their foundation on the infallible Word of God. We are praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

What does the Bible say? Read 1 Timothy 1:3-11

1. Why did Paul want Timothy to stay in Ephesus?

2. What is the goal of speaking truth (See Matthew 22:36-40)?

3. What is the law (See Exodus 20)?

What Do You Think?

Why do you think Paul starts his letter to Timothy reminding him to speak truth?

What Do You Do?

During dinner ask each member of the family to share their favorite Bible story. What truth about God can you learn from this story?

CORE COMPETENCY: Authority of the Bible

I believe the Bible is God's book that tells me what to believe and do.

MEMORY VERSE: Matthew 7:15

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.



OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17) *I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.* **Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today. Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God. **Humanity** (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12) *I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4) I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9) *I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12) *I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

Joy (John 15:11) *I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29) *I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.* **Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13) *I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

Grace (Colossians 3:13) *I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5) *I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.* **Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12) I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life. **Biblical Community** (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4) *I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2) I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8) *I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11) I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20) *I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33) I focus on God and His priorities for my life. Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accom-

plish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7) *I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.* Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for 12 years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Central Bible Church in 1998. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

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