

1 Timothy 4

Introduction:

- False teaching is a topic that is often ignored in evangelical circles.
 - Either you find “discernment ministries” in fundamentalist circles...
 - Or you deal with a “theology of niceness” that ignores serious doctrinal error in an effort to not appear divisive or exclusive.
- But false teaching is real!
- Where do you think false teaching comes from?
 - Unintentional error?
 - Divisive people?
 - Check out 1 Timothy 4.1-2... where does Paul say false teaching comes from?

Dealing with false teaching – vss. 1-5

- **vs. 1** – “the Spirit expressly says” probably means that Paul is referring to Jesus’s words in Matthew 24.10-11 / Mark 13.22.
- False teaching is not a surprise to God.
- There is a demonic element to the source of false teaching.

- **vs. 2** - Human depravity is susceptible to false teaching – insincerity, seared consciences
 - **Discussion question** - What other elements of human depravity contribute to false teaching that Paul may not have listed here?

- **vs. 3a** – This particular false teaching must have promoted asceticism - forbidding marriage and prohibiting certain foods i.e. meat (see Knight, 190).

- **vss. 3b-5** – It is important that Paul spends significantly more time proclaiming the truth that refutes false teaching than he does describing the false teaching itself, so much so that it is difficult to discern exactly what the false doctrine was. Here we have:
 - the goodness of created matter
 - the importance of receiving God’s material provision with thanksgiving (mentioned twice)
 - the “sanctity” of God’s material provision through God’s word and prayer
 - **Application:** Paul is not unaware that material things can easily be a distraction from God and spiritual / eternal matters (see 1 Corinthians 7 for examples).
Here he is saying that those potential distractions are mitigated through personal prayer and the perspective of God’s truth. This prevents both materialistic hedonism as well as the false asceticism dealt with in this chapter.

Instructions for personal piety and public ministry – vss. 6-16

1 Timothy 4.6-16 intertwine the importance of both personal piety and public ministry (Knight 204). Public ministry is empty without personal piety. But there can be no such thing as a private faith that is never proclaimed. This is especially true for an ordained minister (Vs. 14 refers to some form of ordination).

Various characteristics of a good minister of the Gospel (mostly related to personal piety):

- **vs. 6a** - a willingness to teach “these things” to the church...
“These things” probably refers to more than just the truths in vss. 3b-5.
- **vs. 6b** - trained in the “words of the faith” i.e. personal belief in the revealed truth of the Christian faith
- **vs. 6b** - trained in good doctrine
- **vs. 6c** - a “follower” of both the words of faith and good doctrine

- **vs. 7a** - Avoid / reject all “irreverent, silly myths” = unhistorical, untruthful fables (Knight, 195)
ALL Christian ministry to and perspective on the world around us must be grounded in FACTS!
- **vs. 7b** – training based on godliness, in the sense of a life built on the “godliness” that is Christ Jesus and His ministry in 3.16...
- ...and continued training “for” godliness

- **vs. 8 – 9** – explanation of the importance of godliness / faithful saying
This may be based on Jesus’s words in Luke 18.29-30 (Knight, 201)

- **vs. 10** – Paul’s personal expression of why he does what he does -
 - hope set on the living God...
 - who is the Savior of all kinds of people (Knight 203), specifically, all kinds of people who believe

Various characteristics of a good minister of the Gospel (mostly related to public ministry):

- **vs. 11** – ANOTHER exhortation to teach “these things” to the church

- **vs. 12** – There is probably going to be some resistance. The people of the church may not like the correction of false teaching that Timothy will have to give. Especially if some of the elders are older than him, they may look down on him because of his youth. Paul is exhorting Timothy to display impeccable character to soften some of this resistance.

- **vs. 13** – Brief description of public ministry:
 - public reading of Scripture
 - exhortation
 - teaching

- **vs. 14-15** – Stay true to the calling that God has placed on you...
 - For Timothy this seems to have involved an ordination accompanied by prophetic utterance.
 - For contemporary ministers this would be related to more subjective calling and confirmation from the church through ordination.

- **vs. 16** – Consistently persevere in guarding yourself and your teaching. Care must be taken in teaching the truth because salvation is at stake!

Conclusion:

This chapter, perhaps more than others emphasizes the seriousness of the ministry of the Gospel.

- False teaching involves deception, is demonic in origin, and must be repudiated.
- The truth of the living God (vs. 10) must be upheld and regularly taught.
- The minister’s life must be exemplary because of the possibility of resistance to the truth.
- And godliness must be intentionally pursued.