

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday April 5, 2023 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

Honoring 1 TIMOTHY GOD

HONORING GOD
“Exposing False Teachers and Their Teaching”
1 Timothy 6:3-5



Key Reminders for 1 Timothy:

- (1) 1 Timothy is a personal letter
- (2) 1 Timothy is written by Paul to Timothy, his apprentice in ministry
- (3) 1 Timothy is known as a “Pastoral Epistle” (or letter)
- (4) 1 Timothy was written to address problems in the church at Ephesus and encourage their pastor, Timothy
- (5) 1 Timothy was likely written about AD 63

One question bears the asking...

“What was the main problem at the church at Ephesus that Paul was addressing with their young pastor, Timothy?” _____

Remember that one of the key characteristics of the Paul’s letter to Timothy was the primary purpose for his writing the letter in the first place. It was to deal with “false teachers” and their false teaching that had infiltrated the strategic church at the port city of Ephesus.

5 things you need to know about the church at Ephesus: (the church Timothy was pastoring when Paul write this letter to him)

- (1) **It was a church Paul loved deeply** - Many scholars argue—and I’m inclined to agree—that the letter to the Ephesians was written as a circular letter intended to be circulated to all the churches in the region of Ephesus. There’s not much in the way of personal greetings or notes in the letter, unlike some of Paul’s other letters. Still, I think Paul’s deep love for this congregation comes through. Paul spent more time in Ephesus than he did in any other city, approximately three years. Priscilla and Aquilla, two of Paul’s closest companions, helped him start the church. I think Paul’s farewell to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:17-35 is one of the most touching and moving things Paul writes, and shows the great love he had for this congregation. Paul knew this church. He had spent time with them. He loved them. And his love for them shows in sending Timothy to them to help them navigate the difficult waters and problems they were having as a church at a time when Paul was not available to come be with them due to his imprisonment. Paul loved them! ***NOTE: No matter how bad it get in the church, Jesus loves His church and His people and He will provide what they need to be all He has called them to be.***
- (2) **It was a diverse congregation** - Only God could take a group of Jews, idol worshippers, sorcerers, masters, slaves, and rulers of the city and combine them into one church. Our God delights in bringing unity from diversity, and he did it marvelously in Ephesus. We know that Paul started his ministry in Ephesus as he often did, by first seeking out any known believers and then preaching in the synagogue till he got kicked out (Acts 19:8-9). Both Jews and Gentiles heard the word of the Lord (17:10). Some abandoned their magic arts to pursue Christ (17:19). Many abandoned their idols (17:24-26). Masters and slaves worshipped together (Eph. 5:5-9) and Paul counted some of the leaders of the city among his friends (Acts 19:31). It was to this congregation that Paul wrote so powerfully about unity in the Spirit and the power of knowing who we are in Christ. But with this kind of diversity is it any wonder that things got... well, difficult and tenuous at times... that some forms of confusion and false ideologies and teaching could find their way. No wonder the church at Ephesus, that Timothy was not pastoring, had some struggles.

- (3) **It was a church birthed out of a powerful move of God** - It's been said that wherever Paul went he started either a revival or a riot. In Ephesus he started both. The Spirit was on Paul so strongly during his stay in Ephesus that people even carried his discarded handkerchiefs or aprons to the sick and they were healed. Some tried to imitate him. Seven sons of a Jewish priest tried to cast out a demon in the name of "Jesus who Paul preaches." The demon-possessed man overpowered them and beat them until all seven men fled the house wounded and naked. That one got the whole city talking (Acts 19:15-17). It didn't stop there. A group of sorcerers who had accepted Christ brought their magic books and publicly burned them. So many people were accepting Christ that the tradesmen who made silver idols of Artemis began to fear that their trade would be affected. They sparked a riot, claiming that "this Paul" was bringing so many people to Jesus that the great goddess Artemis might be regarded as worthless (Acts 19:23-29). That's like a revival sweeping Las Vegas until the casino owners start worrying they're going to have to shut down. The church at Ephesus didn't wonder what would happen if God really moved. They had witnessed it firsthand.
- (4) **The church at Ephesus was strategic for the growth and advancement of the New Testament church and gospel** – Ephesus was called the "Light of Asia." It was a port city and all ancient commerce and trade passed through Ephesus. The most important road for travel, trade and commerce passed through Ephesus and was even called "Ephesian Way." The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ would be spread on this important route and would be able to advance to places unknown, spreading further and further throughout the ancient world. This city was important and this church was important. Some of the most important figures would spend time in Ephesus and actually call it home. We know Paul spent more time in Ephesus than anywhere else... at least three years. After Paul's death, perhaps a few years later, in all probability very soon after the beginning of the Jewish war, tradition says that the city became the home of the Apostle John. This may or may not be true, but circumstances make it possible, if not probable. He was supposed to have taken Mary, the mother of Jesus, there to live (cf. John 19:26-27). This picture is of a church faithfully serving their Lord and producing the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:21-23; John 15:1-3). It was probably during the reign of Domitian (81-96 A.D.) that John was banished to Patmos. He was released and died during the reign of Trajan according to Irenaeus (an early church historian). Tradition relates that at a very old age John, too feeble to walk, would be carried into this church's assembly and would admonish the members, little children, love one another. During this period the Lord gives His assessment of the Ephesian church through the apostle John (Revelation 2:1-7). He compliments them on their works, but has found a disease in the plant. They have left their first love (Revelation 2:4). He commands immediate action – repent, remember, repeat (the first works) (Revelation 2:5).
- (5) **It was a church acquainted with spiritual warfare especially false teachers and teachings** - It's no accident that Ephesians is the book that gives us Paul's beautiful description of the armor of God. The church at Ephesus was birthed in the midst of a spiritual battle. The Greco-Roman world boasted a plurality of religions, but Ephesus

took it to a whole new level. Ephesus was a city proud of their religious plurality and religious tolerance. Though it was home to the Artemis cult, at least 50 other gods were worshipped in Ephesus. This included Greek gods like Zeus and Athena as well as Egyptian deities like Isis and Sarapis. Ephesus was also a center for Emperor worship—interesting considering that one of the major themes of Ephesians is that Jesus is Lord. **The central religious figure of the city of Ephesus was Artemis.** The ancients considered the temple to Artemis one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Life in Ephesus revolved around the worship of Artemis. A month of the year was named after Artemis and the city held annual games in her honor. The Ephesians believed their relationship to Artemis was governed by a covenant relationship between the city and the goddess. No wonder people got upset when they believed this new religion was mocking the goddess. When someone starts suggesting your patron saint is only an idol made by human hands, it tends to get folks riled up. With all that mishmash of sorcery and idol worship going on, Satan surely had a strong foothold in Ephesus. The church needed to know the authority and power that they had in Christ so that they could claim their rightful victory (Ephesians 6:10-17). So do we.

With that bit of a background for the church at Ephesus, is it any wonder that the church at Ephesus had perhaps lost its vision and purpose. Now let me tell you some things we do and do know about these false teachers that Paul is speaking of in 1 Timothy, and particularly in the passage we are going to be looking at in his study this evening.

Some things to remember about the false teachers and false teaching of Timothy's day:

- (1) **We don't know who the false teachers were** – In other words, we don't know what “flavor” of false teacher they were. Perhaps they were “Judaizers” like in the book of Galatians. Maybe they were “Gnostics,” or maybe pagan worshipper of Greek or Roman gods. We just don't know. There were many false religions in the New Testament world, just like there are today.
- (2) **We don't know exactly what their false teaching was**

Why do you think He doesn't tell us specifically who they were or what specifically their false teaching was? Any thoughts?

- (3) **We do know that they were affecting the church**
- (4) **We do know that Paul saw it as a serious threat to the church, hence he wrote 1 & 2 Timothy** - What is the “seriousness” of false teaching in the church?
- (5) **We do know that there are general biblical principles and truths for dealing with false teachers and teachings**

³ If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, ⁴ he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come

envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, ⁵useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.” -1 Timothy 6:3-5 (NKJV)

How can we recognize false teachers?

The following are “Eleven Characteristics of the False Prophets and False Religions” (the following is compiled from research adapted from Josh McDowell’s “Handbook of Today’s Religions.”)

11 Characteristics of False Teachers/Prophets and False Teaching/Religions:

1. **Peaching/Promoting New Truth** - Many false religions (and cults) promote the false idea that God has revealed something special to them. This is usually truth that has never before been revealed and supersedes and contradicts all previous revelations. The Mormon Church (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) teaches that Christianity was in apostasy for some 18 centuries until God revealed new “truth” to Joseph Smith, Jr., restoring the true gospel that had been lost. Today the Mormon church has its living prophets who receive divine revelation from God, continually bringing new “truth” to the world.
2. **Claims New Interpretations of Scripture** – Some false religions and false teacher (cults) make no claim to new truth or extra-biblical revelation, but believe they alone have the key to interpreting the mysteries in the Bible. The Scriptures are their only acknowledged source of authority, but they are interpreted unreasonably and in a way different from that of orthodox Christianity. They testify that the historic beliefs and interpretations of Scripture are based upon a misunderstanding of the Bible or were pagan in origin. An example of this is found in the writing of “The World Wide Church of God’s” Herbert W. Armstrong: *“I found that the popular church teachings and practices were not based on the Bible. They originated... in paganism. The amazing, unbelievable TRUTH was, the sources of these popular beliefs and practices of professing Christianity was quite largely, paganism and human reasoning and custom, not the Bible! (Herbert W. Armstrong, The Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong, Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1967, P. 298, 294).* The Bible is then reinterpreted, usually out of context, to justify the peculiar doctrines of the cult. Without an objective and reasonable way to understand what the Bible teaches, the cult member is at the mercy of the theological whims of the cult leader.
3. **Uses/Has A Non-biblical Source of Authority** – Some false religions (and cults) have sacred writings or a source of authority that supersedes the Bible. The Mormon Church says, “We believe the Bible to be the Word of God in so far as it is translated correctly...” (Articles of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Article 8). Although this sounds like the Mormons trust the Bible, they, in fact, believe it has been changed and corrupted. So they have their own “non-biblical” sources of authority... such as “The Book of Mormon,” “The Pearl of Great Price,” and “Doctrines and Covenants,” as

greater authoritative sources. Thus, the Bible is not truly their final source of authority. In Christian Science, the Bible is characterized as being mistaken and corrupt and inferior to the writings of Mary Baker Eddy. The Unification Church believes the Bible to be incomplete, while Rev. Moon's "Divine Principle" is the true authoritative source. Other groups such as the "Jehovah's Witness" have their own translation of the Bible called "The New World Translation." And other groups calling themselves "Christian" like "The Way International" and "The Worldwide Church of God" claim the Bible to be their final authority when in actuality their authority is the Bible as interpreted only by the "cult" leader. Regardless of whether the Bible is superseded by other works or reinterpreted by a cult leader, a sure mark of a cult is that the final authority on spiritual matters rests on something other than the plain teaching of Holy Scripture.

4. **Follows Another Jesus (or not Jesus at all)** – One characteristic that is found in all false religion (including all cults) is false teaching about the person of Jesus Christ in light of historical biblical Christianity. The Apostle Paul warned about following after "another Jesus" (2 Corinthians 11:4) who is not the same Jesus who is revealed in Scripture. The "Jesus" of the cults is always someone less than the Bible's eternal God who became flesh, lived here on earth, and died for our sins. The Bible make it clear that Jesus was God in human flesh, second person of the Holy Trinity, who lived a sinless life on earth and died as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Three days after His crucifixion, Jesus rose bodily from the dead. Fifty days afterward he ascended into heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of the Father, interceding on behalf of believers. He will, one day, return bodily to planet earth and judge the living and the dead while setting up His eternal Kingdom. The Jesus of false religion and of false teacher is not the Jesus of the Bible. For example, according to the theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus did not exist as God from all eternity by was rather the first creation of Jehovah God. Before coming to earth, He was Michael the Archangel, the head of all the angels. He is not God. Another false religion, The Mormon Church, does not accept the unique deity of Jesus Christ. He is, to them, one of many gods, the "first-born spirit child," spiritually conceived by a sexual union between the heavenly Father and a heavenly mother. He was also the spirit-brother of Lucifer in His preexistent state. His incarnation was accomplished by the physical union of the heavenly Father and the human Mary. No matter what the particular beliefs of any cult may be, the one common denominator they all possess is a denial of the biblical teaching on the deity of Jesus Christ.
5. **Rejects Orthodox Christianity (as found in the Scripture/the Bible)** – Characteristics of many false religions and religious groups is a frontal attack on orthodox Christianity. They argue that the church has departed from the true faith. They may reject such orthodox Biblical teaching of the church like the deity of Christ, or the humanity of Christ, salvation by grace through faith alone (not works), the triune God, the total depravity of man, the eternal security of the believer or perseverance of the saints, the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture/the Bible), etc.
6. **The Practice of Double-Talk** – A feature of some false religious groups and cults is that they say one thing publicly but internally believe something totally different. Many

organizations call themselves Christians when in fact they deny the fundamentals of the faith. The Mormon church is an example of this kind of double-talk. The first article of faith in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints reads, “We believe... in His Son, Jesus Christ.” This gives the impression Mormons are Christians since they believe in Jesus Christ. However, when we understand the semantics of what they mean by Jesus Christ, we discover they are far removed from orthodox Christianity. Nevertheless, the impression the Mormon church gives from their advertising is that they are another denomination or sect of Christianity. One, therefore, must be on the alert for organizations that advertise themselves as “Christians” but whose internal teaching disagree with Scripture.

7. **Non-Biblical Teaching on the Nature of God (Trinity)** – Another characteristic of false teaching and false religions and all non-Christian cults is either an inadequate view or outright denial of the Holy Trinity. The Biblical doctrine of the Trinity, one God in three Persons, is usually attacked as being pagan or satanic in origin. The Jehovah’s Witnesses are an example of this. They say, “There is no authority in the Word of God for the doctrine of the trinity of the Godhead” (Charles Taze Russell, *Studies in the Scriptures*, V, Brooklyn: International Bible Students, 1912, p. 54). “The plain truth is that this is another of Satan’s attempts to keep the God-fearing person from learning the truth of Jehovah and His Son Christ Jesus” (Let God Be True, Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1946, p. 31). The Way International take a similar position, “Long before the founding of Christianity, the idea of a triune god or a god-in-three-persons was a common belief in ancient religions. Although many of these religions had many minor deities, they distinctly acknowledged that there was one supreme god who consisted of three persons or essences. The Babylonians used an equilateral triangle to represent this three-in-one god, now the symbol of the modern three-in-one believers” (Jesus Christ Is Not God, Victor Paul Wierville, New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1975, p. 11). Cults, therefore, are marked by their deviation on the doctrine of the Trinity and the nature of God.
8. **A Changing Theology** – The doctrinal position and stances of false teachers and false religions (and cults) are continually in a state of flux and have no sure foundation on which to anchor their hope. Adherents of a particular cult will learn a doctrine only to find that doctrine later changed or contradicted by further revelation. Many will deny this, with the possible exception of the Unification Church. Recently they admitted their theology was in a state of flux. The Jehovah’s Witnesses, for example, used to believe vaccinations were sinful. Anyone who allowed himself to be vaccinated would lose his good standing in the organization. Today that is no longer taught. Christianity Today, in an article interviewing William Cetnar (former high official in the Jehovah’s Witnesses), says: “The controversial ban on receiving blood transfusions will probably be lifted after Franz’s death, (Frederick Franz, 87, is the president of the Jehovah’s Witnesses) Cetnar thinks. A new date for the end of the world (JW’s have previously predicted Christ’s return seven times) is likely to be announced, possible 1988 (they missed that one too). By sheer mathematical necessity, some change will have to be made in the JW doctrine

that Christ will return before an elect 144,000 Witnesses have died. 144,000 places are filled by those living in 1914 and few remain alive today. But Christ is supposed to return before the entire generation has died (Christianity Today, Nov. 20, 1981, p.70). The Mormon Church is equally guilty of changing doctrine. The most famous is its belief and practice, later prohibited, of polygamy... which is now once again re-stated by some.

- 9. Strong Charismatic Leadership** - False religions and Cults are usually characterized by central leader figures who consider themselves messengers of God with unique access to the Almighty. Since the leader has such a special relationship with God, he can dictate the theology and behavior of those who follow. Consequently, he exercises enormous influence over the group. This is true, for example, in the Unification Church, The Way International and the Worldwide Church of God. The strong leadership leads the cult followers into total dependence upon the cult for belief, behavior and lifestyle. When this falls into the hands of particularly corrupt leaders, the results can be tragic, as with Jim Jones and the People's Temple or David Koresh and the Branch Davidians. The more dramatic the claims of a cult leader, the more the possibility of a tragic conclusion.
- 10. Salvation by Works** – Most false religions and false teachers will in one way or another, either stated or unstated, with promote a salvation that is based on some sort of works, duty, following a particular code or way. One teaching that is totally absent from all the cults is the gospel of the grace of God. No one is taught in the cults that he can be saved from eternal damnation by simply placing his faith in Jesus Christ. It is always belief in Jesus Christ and “do this” or “follow that.” Most all false religions and false teacher will attach something to the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. It might be baptism, obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, or something else, but it is never taught that faith in Christ alone will save anyone.
- 11. False Prophecy** - Another feature of false religion and false teachers including cults is they often promulgate false prophecy. Cult leaders, who believe they have been divinely called by God, have made bold predictions of future events, supposedly revealed by the inspiration of God. Unfortunately, for the cult leaders, these predictions of future events do not come to pass. The one who prophesied is exposed as a false prophet.

Observation - While not every false teacher, false religion or cult type group may practice or be characterized by all of these, these are some warning signs to look for that are likely to be present. Any one of these is bad enough to cause alarm. Beware of a group that embraces some of these features. The sure mark of a false teacher or false religious group is what it does with the person of Jesus Christ. False teachers ultimately deny the fact that Jesus Christ is God the Son, second Person of the Holy Trinity, and mankind's only hope.

“A key to how well you understand other religious faiths and cults is how well you understand your own.” – Fritz Ridenour, “So What’s The Difference”

I might reword it a bit to say that how well you understand and are able to discern false religions, false teaching and false teachers is how will you understand your own.

A false teacher isn't going to tell you he's teaching heresy. In fact, he'll usually look and sound so sincere and passionate that you wouldn't know he's actually twisting God's Word. The size of the crowds around him won't tell you much either, since many people have been and continue to be led astray by teaching that pleases their ears. The prophet Jeremiah kept telling the people of Judah over and over what God planned for Jerusalem, urging them to turn from their wicked ways. But the people preferred to listen to false prophets who told them what they wanted to hear. ***We have to make sure we're not doing the same.*** So, how exactly can you tell if someone is "wolf in sheep's clothing"? Notice what Jesus said in Matthew 7:15–20, ***"¹⁵ Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Therefore by their fruits you will know them."***

How do you recognize false teachers?

What marks do you look for in a false teacher?

What can the church do to better keep false prophets and pastors out of the pulpits?

Religious false teachers down through the centuries have known something in common, namely, that religion can be profitable and popular (tickle ears) —for them, at least. They have proved that you can make a good living in the religion business. Some, like Reverend Ike (Fredrick Joseph Eikerenkoetter II), openly flaunt their materialistic greed. Rev. Ike's creed was, ***"I don't want pie in the sky when I die; I want cash in the stash here and now!"*** Asked how much his church is worth, Ike replies, ***"A lot of money. This is a very successful, prosperous, multimillion-dollar operation, and I'm very happy to say that."*** He also claims not to know his personal salary, but explains, ***"It's whatever I need."*** (*Newsweek*, Dec. 20, 1982.)

Others promoting the so-called "Word of Faith" teaching or "Health and Wealth Prosperity gospel" tell people that it's God's will for all His people to be financially successful. They quote verses to back up their teaching and flaunt their own wealth as proof positive. As you know, Jim Bakker actually got time for defrauding his constituents and illegally using ministry funds to support his lavish lifestyle. But many others are still aggressively promoting this false and damaging teaching.

In our day when false teachers abound perhaps more than at any other time in history, and when, due to the mass media, they have greater access to more people than ever before, how can you be discerning so as not to be led astray? How can you distinguish a false teacher from a true one?

Paul gives an answer in our passage, in **1 Timothy 6:3-5**. It is not a comprehensive answer, of course, which would require developing a thorough understanding of the whole Bible. But it's an answer that exposed the false teachers in Ephesus; and if they would take heed, it would keep many unsuspecting people in our day from falling into false teaching. Here is the principle... Paul is saying that ...

PRINIPLE: Teachers who promote gain rather than godliness are not from God

Let me explain or state what I mean. **Sound doctrine—spiritually healthy doctrine—is not focused on personal gain, either for the teacher or the pupil, but on godliness.** Of course, notice in verse 6, just below our passage that godliness is actually a means of great gain... Paul writes, **“Now godliness with contentment is great gain.”**

★ But in verse 5 our passage, Paul is talking about the “gain” of self-seeking and personal fulfillment. **It is using religion for selfish ends.**

Let me give you some facts pertaining to the false religions and cults:

- ***Today it is estimated that between 35 & 50 million people are involved in some form of false “Christian” group or cult organization in America and on foreign mission fields.***
- ***It is believed that over 60 million people dabble in some form of New Age practice or occultic thinking today.***
- ***One of the fastest growing religious groups that often identify themselves as “Christian” is actually considered a “cult” and has exceeded 10 million in membership (Mormonism, The Church of Latter Day Saints).***
- ***There are more than 3,000 New Age and Occult Bookstores operating in the United States today.***
- ***The “cults” and other unorthodox religious “pseudo-christian” groups are gaining increased respectability and are making great strides towards being accepted into the mainstream Christian community (church).***

3 Reasons Cults, False Religious Groups and Pseudo-Christian Group Prosper: *this includes what are called false religious Christian groups or these pseudo-Christian groups... Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society/Kingdom Hall (Jehovah’s Witnesses), The Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormons), The Way, The Way International, Oneness Pentecostals, The Unitarian Church, Universalists some include The Health, Wealth and Prosperity Churches of today, as well as some of the hyper-progressive churches today, the New Apostolic Church and the New Apostolic Reformation Church (NAR), The International Church of Christ (ICOC) (*Josh McDowell, “Handbook of Today’s Religions”*)

- (1) The cults and false religious groups provide answers** – a major reason the cults are flourishing is that in an unsure world they provide authoritative answer to man’s basic questions: Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?
- (2) The cults and false religious groups meet human needs** – Cults flourish because they appeal to man’s basic human need. All of us need to be loved, to feel needed, to sense

our lives have direction and meaning. Individuals who experience an identity crisis or have emotional problems are particularly susceptible to cults.

(3) The cults and false religious groups make a favorable impression – If the church fails to carefully and seriously provide spiritual warmth and true exposition of the Word of God, those with spiritual needs will find other avenues of fulfillment. Many cults prey on ignorance, and try to impress the uninformed with pseudo-scholarship. An example is The Way International’s leader, Victor Paul Wierwille, who quotes profusely from Hebrew and Greek sources in an attempt to give the impression of scholarship. Representatives of Jehovah’s Witnesses who go door to door give a similar impression of great learning. To combat this, the believer must know what he or she believes and why he or she believes it and thus be able to expose the cult’s teachings.

Have you ever wondered how the cults ensnare so many people? Maybe that why! Basically, they identify unmet felt needs that people have and then offer ways to meet those needs apart from the living and true God. Perhaps also, they prey on people who profess to be Christians, but who are untaught or unstable in their walk with God.

For example, in her book, *My Turn* (excerpted in *Newsweek* [10/23/89]), Nancy Reagan tells how she got linked up with astrologer Joan Quigley. Mrs. Reagan was upset over the assassination attempt on her husband’s life. To calm her fears, she had tried prayer and had talked with religious leaders, such as Billy Graham and Donn Moomaw (her pastor). But then one afternoon her friend Merv Griffin mentioned this astrologer, who claimed that she could have warned the Reagans in advance about the fateful March 30th, when the president was shot. Mrs. Reagan called her and the astrologer responded with the warmth and compassion the First Lady needed. This began many months of counsel, which cost Mrs. Reagan dearly—she won’t disclose how much, but just says that “it wasn’t cheap.” When Mr. Reagan found out about it, his response was, “If it makes you feel better, go ahead and do it. But be careful. It might look a little odd if it ever came out.” In other words, the bottom line is not whether it conforms you to God’s Word of truth, but rather, “How does it make you feel and how does it look to others?”

What Mrs. Reagan did has been done by millions of professing Christians in our country. They have not diligently sought the Lord and judged their own sins in order to grow in godliness. Trials come into their lives and they don’t know how to deal with them. All they know is that they are not at peace. Along comes some false teaching that offers them a solution. It mingles enough Bible to make it sound Christian. They buy into it, never realizing that they are seeking personal gain or happiness rather than godliness. That’s how false teachings gain momentum. So Paul’s teaching here that teachers who promote gain rather than godliness are not of the Lord is quite relevant in our day, and we would do well to hear him closely.

Again, we aren't sure historically just who these false teachers were. They could have been the Gnostics, who prided themselves on their esoteric "knowledge." They may have been "Sophists," men who charged for giving entertaining, oratorical lectures. They might have been "Judaizers" who were promoting an salvation by works kind of theology. But whoever they were, Paul shows four ways that they promoted gain rather than godliness. These errors apply to the false teachers of our day.

4 Ways the False Teachers of Paul's Day were Promoting Gain Over Godliness:

- (1) False teachers promote gain through wrong content**
- (2) False teaching promote gain through wrong motives**
- (3) False teachers promote gain through wrong conduct**
- (4) False teachers promote gain through wrong values**

Let's look at teach one of these individually and think about the instruction Paul is giving to Timothy in light of these false teachers, and to us by way of teaching.

FALSE TEACHERS PROMOTE GAIN THROUGH WRONG CONTENT

Notice our passage again... look at it in 1 Timothy 6:3-5, *"³ If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, ⁴ he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, ⁵useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself."*

Note (v. 3), "different doctrine," "sound words," "doctrine conforming to godliness"; (v. 4), "disputes about words"; (v. 5) "the truth." **The content of their teaching was in error.** As we have seen in 1 Timothy, doctrine matters greatly!

- ➔ Jonathan Edwards observed, **"The ideas and images in men's minds are the invisible powers that constantly govern them."** What you think always affects how you behave. Satan always begins his attacks through wrong thinking. Wrong theology leads to wrong living.

We live in an anti-theological day. Some pastors of successful churches even boast, "We're not into theology!"

- They emphasize management, methodology, and technique.
 - They analyze their target audience and design church programs to attract this demographically-defined swath of the population by meeting their felt needs.
- ➔ • But as seminary professor, Dr. James Means, argues, **"Every great movement and ministry in Christendom has been fueled—nay, driven—by theology, not by hot new technology or Madison Avenue technique"** ("Focal Point," April-June, 1994, p. 8).

You may not even be aware of it, but you have a theology. If I were to ask how many of you have read a theological book in the past year (or in your lifetime), the number would probably be quite small. You may not be able to articulate your theology, and you may even be bored by the subject. But even so, you do have a theology, and your theology, to a large extent, determines your behavior. What you think about God, human nature, sin, salvation, judgment, and other biblical themes greatly affects how you live each day.

In our day, the prevailing theology is man-centered, heavily subjective and relative. By man-centered, I mean that people conceive of God as the servant of mankind. He is not the sovereign, omnipotent, Creator-God who fashioned man for His purpose. Rather, He is a sort of Cosmic Aladdin's genie who exists to make man happy. "Do you have problems in your life? Try God! He will meet all your needs and give you a happy life!" The emphasis is on man's needs rather than on God's glory.

Here's how this works out in life: You have a guy who has lived a self-centered, sinful life. Then, personal tragedy strikes. His response is, "How could a loving God let this happen to me?" He's saying, "If God exists, He should be there to serve me and make me happy. It doesn't matter that God is sovereign or that I have sinned and deserve His judgment. All that matters is me, and I'm in a jam now, so God, You help me!" God isn't central; man is. And that wrong theology determines how the person reacts when problems hit.

Most American theology is not only man centered, but also subjective and relative. What I mean is that one's experience of God takes precedence over the objective truth about God. God is not seen as an objective, absolute Being with certain unchangeable attributes and with absolute moral laws which stem from His nature. Instead, God is however you experience Him. So professing Christians say things like, "If you're into a God who judges sin, that's okay for you. But my God is a God of grace and love." Personal feelings and experience are central, not objective revealed truth.

Note the two pegs Paul uses to measure sound ("healthy") theology by (v. 3):

2 Pegs Paul Uses to Measure Sound Theology: *³ If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness,*

(1) Sound doctrine centers on the Lord Jesus Christ - Sound doctrine always points to the centrality of Jesus Christ and His sacrificial death on the cross. "Christ Jesus as Lord" (2 Cor. 4:5), "Christ is all" (Col. 3:11), "Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:23), "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24), "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27), "every man complete in Christ" (Col. 1:28)--the centrality and supremacy of Christ are the themes Paul majored on. Whether he lived or died, Paul's goal was that Christ would be exalted (Phil. 1:20). Sound theology does not center on man, but on God and His eternal purpose in Christ.

(2) **Sound doctrine conforms to godliness** - That is, it is not subjective and relative, it is not “God, however you may experience Him.” “Godliness,” a dominant theme in the pastoral epistles, means conduct in line with God and His revealed truth (see Titus 1:1), especially as revealed and taught by the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus whenever you hear someone promoting man-centered theology, where God exists to please man, and subjective, relativistic theology, beware! They are promoting gain, not godliness, through wrong content.

FALSE TEACHERS PROMOTE GAIN THROUGH WRONG MOTIVES

Paul doesn't mince words--he says that these false teachers were motivated by conceit or pride. Notice his words in verse 4, “*He (the false teacher) is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions.*” In other words... (What characteristic do you see there that Paul points out in these false teachers?)

- They claimed to have knowledge.
- They apparently went to great lengths to expound the nuances of various words and to give their insights on controversial questions (v. 4).
- But Paul says that they acted out of pride and they didn't understand anything.
- They loved a following.
- They thrived on being up front and displaying their knowledge. They prided themselves on being the experts.

Godly teaching always humbles our pride and exalts the Savior. False teaching trifles with God and builds up man.

Charles Simeon, a godly Anglican pastor who was used greatly by God almost two centuries ago, had three aims in his preaching:

Charles Simeon's Three Aims in Preaching:

- (1) To **humble the sinner**
- (2) To **exalt the Savior**
- (3) To **promote holiness**

They are fairly evident goals, if you read your Bible. Much preaching today does not center on these things... in fact, many today and even many “experts” in preaching may criticized those objectives. They were taken in by the false teaching that says that a main need is to build everyone's self-esteem, so they disagreed that we ought to endeavor to humble sinners! Folks if we don't get them lost, we can't get them saved! If man doesn't see his great, great need, he will never see a need for the Savior. It seem today that preaching focuses to a large extent in “feel good” sermons, “sugar stick” sermons, “I'm okay, you're okay” kind of

theology, we must be seeking-friendly, don't talk about subject that make people too uncomfortable or push people away. *What is wrong with this? What are the results of this?*

This wrong motive of pride is tied up with the man-centered theology I mentioned earlier. False teaching starts with man, centers on man, and builds up man. The reason it thrives is that because of our sin, we are all prone to exalt ourselves against God and to accept any teaching that makes us feel good (subjective theology) without confronting our sin. We don't want to be stripped of our self-reliance, to admit that we are lost and destitute in ourselves unless God is gracious to us.

But biblical theology starts with, centers in, and finishes with the cross of Jesus Christ. And one of the central facts of the cross is "that no one should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9; 1 Cor. 1:18-31). When we understand the cross, we can only sing with gratitude (**Augustus Toplady**, "Rock of Ages"),

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress,
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior or I die!

Thus Paul shows that false teachers promote gain through wrong content and wrong motives.

FALSE TEACHERS PROMOTE GAIN THROUGH WRONG CONDUCT

Out of the man's wrong content and wrong motives develop wrong conduct. Pride leads to envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth. Isn't that what Paul tells us in our passage? Notice it in **verses 4-5** again, "⁴ *He (the false teacher) is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, ⁵useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.*"

Their conduct stems from their motives. Since they promote themselves more than Christ, they're competitive towards others. They put down others to build themselves up. They are always engaged in controversy. But their goal is not to build Christ's kingdom, but their own. So they dominate people through intimidation rather than shepherd people out of love.

NOTE: We should not take this to mean that we should never confront wrong. We would be in error to conclude from verses 4 & 5 that all theological controversy is wrong. Some people are so prone to peace and unity that they condemn as divisive anyone who refutes theological error or exposes false teachers. But that is precisely what Paul is forcefully doing here:

refuting error by exposing and attacking these false teachers. Some say, “We shouldn’t criticize or bring up negatives; just teach right doctrine.” Oh, yes we should! That’s naive and not biblical. Paul not only attacked false teaching and false teachers (as he does here); he also told Titus (1:9) that a qualification for elders is that they “be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”

But the difference between Paul’s methods and those of the false teachers was that...

- Paul’s attacks on false doctrine were not selfishly oriented, whereas the false teachers were promoting self.
- Paul wasn’t out for personal glory, to make a name for himself (1 Thess. 2:6). He wanted God’s truth, especially as centered on the gospel, to prevail.
- With John the Baptist, Paul could honestly say, “[Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).
- He had the good of God’s flock in mind whenever he confronted error.

Whenever we must correct error or confront false teachers, we need to examine our hearts and root out any pride or self-seeking to make sure that our goal is biblical love. Thus false teachers promote gain through wrong content, wrong motives, and wrong conduct. Finally,

FALSE TEACHERS PROMOTE GAIN THROUGH WRONG VALUES

Listen to all of **verse 5** of our passage again... pay attention especially to the last part of that verse... *“Useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.”*

“Who suppose that godliness is a means of gain” (v. 5). (The KJV “gain is godliness” is not correct.) That is, these false teachers were living for material values above spiritual values. They treasured the temporal above the eternal. Instead of being prophets of God, they were making a profit on God. Apparently, they were living well off their “ministries” and flaunting it.

As Paul has just shown (1 Tim. 5:17-18), it is proper for a man who labors in the gospel to be adequately supported by the gospel. **But it is wrong for a man in the ministry to focus on money or to profiteer from the gospel.** I’ve always been bothered by pastors who negotiate their salary package as those in the world do, or who move to a new church because of a pay increase, unless their current situation does not provide for their needs (not their wants!). It is wrong for all believers to live for this world’s values. John write in **1 John 2:15, “Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”**

In *This Was John Calvin* (Baker, pp. 164-165) Thea Van Halsema tells the story of Cardinal Sadolet, a high-ranking Roman Catholic official who had tried to coax Geneva back to Rome, who passed incognito through Geneva. He wanted to have a look at the famous

Protestant reformer. He stood amazed in front of the simple house on Canon Street. Did the famous Calvin live in this little place? He knocked. Calvin himself, in a plain black robe, answered the door. Sadolet was dumbfounded. Where were the servants who should have been scurrying about to do their master's bidding? Even the bishops of Rome in that day lived in mansions surrounded by wealth and servants. Archbishops and cardinals lived in palaces like kings. And here was the most famous man in the whole Protestant Church, in a little dark house, answering his own door.

Pope Pius 4th said of John Calvin when he died, "The strength of that heretic came from the fact that money was nothing to him." In the Church of Rome at that time, such an attitude was unheard of (*ibid.*, p. 164). Quite often, you can spot a false teacher by his wrong values. If he is living for the things of this world, it should send up a red flag.

CONCLUSION

Thus Paul is saying that teachers who promote gain rather than godliness are not from the Lord. They may do it through wrong content, wrong motives, wrong conduct, or wrong values. But in one form or another, they are saying that you should pursue personal gain, not godliness.

Paul's words to Timothy and to us regarding false teachers are not only exposing of their ways and inner motives (proud, unknowing, argumentative, envious, strife promoting, reviling, evil, suspicious, useless, corrupt, empty of truth), but his words give us without hesitation how we are to deal with "false teachers" and their "teaching." Notice our passage one more time and see if you don't recognize what we are to do concerning these "false teachers."

³ If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, ⁴ he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, ⁵ useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself."

"From such withdraw yourself"... Interestingly, your Bible may have a footnote here saying something like "better manuscripts do not contain this phrase." In other words, some early manuscripts do not contain the phrase "from such withdraw yourself." I personally don't have a problem believing that Paul did write this. It is consistent with what he says elsewhere concerning what we are to do with false teachers. Let me give you three great admonitions from Paul elsewhere in his writing.

3 Closing Reminders of What We Are to Do with False Teachers:

- (1) **We are to expose them (Ephesians 5:11)** - Ephesians 5:11, *“Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.”*
- (2) **We are to avoid them (Romans 16:17-18)** - Romans 16:17-18, *“I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.”*
- (3) **We are to turn away from them (2 Timothy 3:1-5)** - 2 Timothy 3:1-5, *“But know this, that in the last days ^[a]perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”*

In other words, “from such withdraw yourself.”