

1 Timothy

I. Introduction

- A. **1 Timothy 1:3-7** . . . As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, [4] nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith. [5] But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. [6] For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, [7] wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.
- B. In these five verses, Paul identifies several forms of bad, false, and misleading teaching, and he explains the character and motives driving those who teach such things. Yet in the middle of these five verses is one of the most profound statements about what the focus or goal of teaching is supposed to be within the Christian community.
- C. Pray

II. The goal of Christian teaching

- A. Our focus today is **vs 5** – and the first part of **vs 5** states that love is the goal, or the desired outcome of the various forms and formats of Christian teaching. This goal is in contrast to the goal of bad, false, and misleading teaching. The second part of **vs 5** deals with the kind or quality of heart, conscience, and faith needed to live according to genuine love in thought, word, and deed. We will begin by looking at the first part of **vs 5**.
- B. [5] The goal of our instruction **is love**
 - 1. Why is love the goal of Christian teaching? Why is love to be the goal of where church leaders' lead the people? Why is love to be the goal of Bible studies and youth group meetings and Sunday School classes? Because living a life ruled by love and treating the people in your life according to love is the most all-encompassing, comprehensive way to live a godly life. For example:
 - a. Love is to make up the whole of our relationship with God.
 - b. Love is to be the deciding factor in how we treat those around us.

- c. And love is to rule over our thoughts, words, and deeds so that it becomes natural for us to want to live accordingly.
2. However, before we can live according to love we have to know what love is, which is why a succinct definition of love is important.
 - a. The definition I settled on is: “Love seeks the good of everyone who is in any way affected by my choices and behavior.”
 - b. In other words, love – in all ways and in every situation – seeks and searches for and inquires about and strives to do what is in the best interest of everyone affected in some way by loves choices and behavior.
3. Now you may be wondering why we need a definition of love when love seems to well-up within us of its own accord, or it seems to come and go – depending on the circumstances or the people we’re with.
 - a. I believe we need a definition of love because there are times when it is difficult to know what love should do, and there are people whose good we are not inclined to seek, or don’t even want to seek because of the way they have treated us.
 - b. Yet as God’s word makes clear, love is to be no less love, and seeking the good of others is to be nothing less seeking their good even if they are an enemy or a persecutor or an unjust boss or an abuser of power or a willfully sinful Christian or an unloving spouse or a wayward child.
 - c. Therefore, to love as love requires, we must first and foremost take love out of the feelings and emotions category and make it a choice – an intelligent, intentional, deliberate, and sometimes gracious choice – to seek the other’s good regardless of their treatment of us or what it costs us. Hence the need for a definition.
4. A definition clearly defines love’s standard so we can fashion, or gauge, or judge our thoughts, words, and deeds according to love’s standard.
 - a. For example, **1 Corinthians 13:4-8**, though not a clearcut definition, provides the kind of information that helps us understand what love is and what it isn’t. “Love **is** patient, love **is** kind and **is not** jealous; love **does not** brag and **is not** arrogant, [5] **does not** act unbecomingly; it **does not** seek its own, **is not** provoked, **does not** take into account a wrong suffered, [6] **does not** rejoice in unrighteousness, but **rejoices** with the truth; [7] **bears** all things, **believes** all things, **hopes** all things, **endures** all things. [8] Love never fails (*to act like love*).”

- b. Though **1 Cor. 13** is God’s word and a powerful statement about love, it is not as succinct or as comprehensive as I would like a definition for love to be. Therefore, I use, “Love seeks the good of everyone who is in any way affected by my choices and behavior.”
- 5. With this definition of love in mind, I want to review some of the scriptures that speak about love, because they give practical application to the definition of love.
 - a. **Romans 13:10**, “Love does no wrong to a neighbor (*the negative way of saying love only seeks the good of a neighbor*); therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”
 - (1) When this scripture says love does no wrong to a neighbor, it does not mean love never says **no** to a person’s desires and requests, or that love never disciplines and punishes misbehavior, or that love never leads to a neighbor feeling guilty, embarrassed or ashamed over inappropriate behavior, or that love does not require a neighbor to study, be responsible, work hard, and be self-controlled.
 - (2) Though love is often seeking the good of an individual, it’s focus is the good of the community. Therefore, love never compromises or endangers the good of the community when promoting and protecting the good of an individual.
 - b. **Romans 12:9**, “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.”
 - (1) In other words, let love be single-minded, that is, let it be free of anything that would dilute or alter it or act contrary to it.
 - (2) For example, do not let love become a mixture of love and selfishness, or love and manipulation, or love and ungodly anger, or love and insensitivity, or love and unfaithfulness, or love and unkindness. And do not let love become a mixture of love and resentment or bitterness over having given love but not received what you desire in return.
 - (3) One of the most effective ways to keep love pure or single-minded is to –
 - (a) **Abhor** what is evil – first within yourself, then in your behavior, and after that, in others.
 - (b) **Cling** to what is good – good as determined by God’s word, God’s will, and God’s ways. But to cling to what is good you must exercise self-control and put in the time, thought, and prayers needed to get to know God’s word, His will, and His ways.

- c. **1 John 4:10-11**, “In this is love, not that we loved God (*which is our response to the undeserved love, mercy, and grace God shows us*), but that He loved us (*which is His response to our willful rebellion against Him*) and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (*Love’s standard is not set by our response to being loved by God, but by God’s response to our need – a need we brought upon ourselves by rebelling against Him.*) [11] Beloved, if God so loved us (*responded to our need in spite of what we deserved*), we also ought to love one another (*In other words, if we have accepted this standard of love from God, then we ought to love those around us according to this same standard.*)”
 - d. **1 John 3:16-18** supports **1 John 4:10-11**, with these words, “We know love (*or know what love is*) by this, that [Jesus] laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. [17] But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother **in need** and closes his heart against him, how does the **love** of God abide in him? [18] Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.”
6. The point of this is that we need a clear, practical, and applicable definition of love because it gives us a succinct means to measure our thoughts, words, and deeds according to the standard of love. If we depend on the feelings and emotions of love instead of a definition, we will love when we feel like it, but when we don’t feel like it, we won’t love.
- C. Returning to **1 Timothy 1:5**, we see that we need more than a good, working definition of love. We need a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Why?
- 1. Because the condition of your heart significantly affects your willingness and ability to live according to love’s standard.
 - 2. The condition of your conscience is vital to discerning when you are and when you aren’t speaking or behaving according to love’s standard.
 - 3. And the condition of your faith significantly affects the amount of courage you have to love according to love’s standard when doing so threatens your well-being or costs more than you want to pay.
- D. The goal of our instruction is **love from a pure heart**
- 1. In **Ecclesiastes 9:3**, we read, “The hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives.”

- a. Based on my experience with myself and others, and according to the definition of the word “pure,” I doubt any of us in this room has a pure heart. However, I don’t doubt that many of us want a pure heart.
- b. One of the biggest challenges to having a pure heart is that we are prone to be double minded.
 - (1) For example, though your general inclination may be to be godly, it is probable you still harbor – in your heart – forms of selfishness, pride, resentment, anger, irrational fear, impatience, immorality, unbridled passion, and other such things that make your heart impure.
 - (2) In other words, though you may want what Christians ought to want, it is highly likely you still want some of the things you ought not to want. This is double-mindedness.
2. An example of a double-minded heart is trying to love God as you ought while loving money because of what it does for you.
3. A less obvious example is being physically faithful to your marriage vows while looking and lusting in your heart for what you would like but know you ought not to have.
 - a. Though being faithful to your marriage vows is right and good, harboring desires for what you ought not have is not only wrong, it dilutes and hinders your ability and willingness to love your spouse according to love’s standard. And it does this by promoting such feelings and thoughts as discontentment, ungratefulness, and thoughts of being cheated because you see yourself as giving but not getting what you want in return.
 - b. The truth is, any impurity in your heart or any double-mindedness results in practicing a form of love that is not as all-encompassing or comprehensive as love is intended to be.
4. Therefore, I urge you to press forward in pursuing and working for a pure heart. And a wise prayer to pray to help you with this is David’s prayer in **Psalm 51:10**, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

E. The goal of our instruction is **love from a good conscience**

1. In essence, your conscience is, first of all, that part of your being which determines the character or quality of your words, actions, purposes, and affections. Then your conscience becomes an inner voice that warns against and condemns that which is wrong while approving and promoting what is right.

2. In a world filled with temptations, trying circumstances, difficult people, and plenty of opportunities to feel sorry for yourself because you are not getting what you want or believe you deserve, we need a good conscience to help us love according to love's standard.
 3. However, we can sear and harden our conscience by repeated ungodly behavior so that it becomes calloused and loses its ability to function as intended (**I Tim 4:2; Ephesians 4:18-19**).
 4. Therefore, **1 Peter 3:16** exhorts us to keep our conscience in good working order so that, according to Paul's exhortation in **1 Timothy 1:5**, we can love according to love's standard.
- F. The goal of our instruction is **love from a sincere faith**.
1. This sincere faith is faith in God, that is, believing that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-wise, always perfectly good, and that His word is true and shows us the true path of life.
 2. This is vital to loving as we ought to love, because it is our faith in God that makes us confident we are safe in His hands. And it is this confidence that gives us the courage, perseverance, and strength to love according to love's standards – regardless of the circumstances or people involved.
 3. The reality is, we will only love according to love's standards when we feel it is either safe or cost effective (*the return is worth the price paid*) to love as we ought.
 4. To the degree to which we don't feel safe or don't feel the return is worth the cost, to that degree we will bring self-protection or fear of being taken advantage of or resentment over giving but not getting back what we want – we will bring those kinds of things into our acts of love which will decrease and degrade and cheapen the good we are willing to do for the sake of those being loved.

III. Conclusion

- A. Therefore, a sincere faith is just as vital as a good conscience and a pure heart if we are to love as God created us to love, and teaches us to love, and sets the example for us to love.
- B. And if this kind of love is to be the common practice among Christians, this kind of love must be the goal of our teaching.