

1 Timothy

I. Introduction

A. **1 Timothy 1:5-11** . . . 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. [8] But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, [9] realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers [10] and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, [11] according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.

B. Pray

II. The nature and character of ungodly teachers in the church

A. [6a] For some men, straying from these things...

1. The straying from these things refers back to loving from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.
 - a. The word “stray” means to wander away or to wander off course so as to go in a different direction and end up at a different place than originally intended.
 - b. Therefore, this means that it was as these teachers and leaders strayed away from the pure goal of Christian teaching that they began involving themselves in fruitless discussions, misleading teaching, and self-exaltation, or pride.
2. In other words, these teachers and leaders did not wake up one morning and decide to change their focus or direction of their teaching. Their change in focus and direction progressively took place over a period of time.
 - a. And the reason they strayed or wandered away was because they failed to keep a firm grip on the true goal of Christian teaching – love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.
 - b. In other words, their focus strayed from the truths of God’s word and love as the predominant manifestation of the Christian life

to a focus that revolved around themselves, their importance in the church, and their holding the position of a teacher.

- c. So how did they stray? Through a lack of vigilance. Though they didn't get up one morning and decide to pursue a new goal and different direction, neither did they get up each morning and affirm their commitment to remain faithful to the true goal of Christian teaching and godly living.
3. We are prone to this same kind of straying due to a lack of vigilance:
 - a. be it straying from teaching what is most important for the health of the church to teaching what draws a crowd and gains us praise,
 - b. or straying from an area of godliness into a more worldly mindset and ungodly behaviors,
 - c. or straying from studying and pondering God's word to mindlessly or only occasionally reading it,
 - d. or straying from trusting God to take care of us to being anxious and fearful.
 - e. Obviously, this list could go on, but I will leave it to you to examine your life to see if you have been straying in some area.
 - f. When explaining His parable of the four soils, Jesus described this kind of straying in **Matthew 13:22**, "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."
4. The point here is that straying can happen to any of us. And it happens for two reasons.
 - a. **First**, we stray because we personally fail to remain vigilant about staying on track so that we don't allow distractions or unnecessary enticements to motivate us to wander away from what really matters.
 - b. **Second**, we stray because as a group, we fail to observe what is happening in the lives of our fellow believers and call them back to the truths of God's word when we see them straying and doing things that harm their spiritual health and the spiritual health of the church.
5. There are two portions of scripture that exhort this kind of group effort among believers.
 - a. **Hebrews 10:23-25**, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; [24] and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

[25] not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

- b. **Ephesians 4:11–16**, “And He (*Jesus*) gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, [12] for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. [14] As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; [15] but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in **love**.”
6. Do you get up in the morning and affirm your commitment to the goal of Christian living?
- a. Do you regularly examine your thoughts, words, and deeds to see if you are becoming distracted or enticed away from living according to God’s word?
 - b. Do you humbly, gently, and respectfully speak up when you observe others in our church straying from godly living?
 - c. Are you involved enough with others in the church to know when you ought to speak up?
 - d. Are you open to others being involved this much in your life?
 - e. We are in this together, and if we will work together and help each other pursue God and godliness, we will make progress toward Christian maturity, which in turn will prevent a lot, if not most of the straying that takes place among individual Christians and whole churches.

B. **[6b]** have turned aside to fruitless discussion,

- 1. Any slide or wandering away from a correct understanding of the Word of God and practice of godly love always leads to beliefs and practices that are worse.
 - a. And in this case, worse either means it leads to beliefs, teaching, and practices that are of no value and help for living a godly life,

- b. or it leads to things that work directly against the truths, beliefs, values, and practices that God's word teaches are important and that enable us to live a godly life.
 2. Finally, I want to point out that straying from the truth not only degrades our Christian teachings and practices, it damages the spiritual quality of our character as well.
- C. [7a] 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.
 1. Notice the progressive change in character of those who stray from the truth of God's word and neglect the primary focus of Christian teaching.
 - a. Humility is pushed aside by pride.
 - b. A servant's mindset gives way to the belief that I ought to be in a leadership role – and especially an up-front role during church meetings.
 - c. An honest assessment of my ability to serve in the church loses out to the desire to be respected as someone knowledgeable in the scriptures and able to teach, even when I'm not.
 2. In the early years of our church, we had a man in our fellowship who wanted to teach, and the reality is, he was eloquent with words. When he spoke of spiritual things, it sounded good.
 - a. However, though he knew the right words, and he know how to convey them in a spiritually appealing way, he lacked personal experience in living according to the words.
 - b. So though he knew the words, he couldn't lead you or teach you or counsel you how to live according to the words because he hadn't traveled that way himself. And he hadn't traveled that way himself because he was what John Bunyon called "a saint abroad, and a devil at home."
 - c. So in spite of how good he sounded, his words were empty and his message shallow.
 - d. What was just as sad at that time, is that most of our group couldn't tell the difference between his speaking and the speaking of someone who was living according to what he taught.
 - e. Can you tell the difference between someone who sounds good and someone who has personal experience with what he is saying because he lives according to what he says? To be able to tell the difference requires living according to what you know.

3. In that same time period, there was a young man among us who came and told me I wasn't a good teacher and that he could do much better. To solve this problem, he proposed that he should start teaching at least 50% of the time, if not more.
 - a. Now I don't see myself as a good speaker, so I had no quarrel with his assessment of my teaching.
 - b. My problem was with the pride that motivated this young man to step forward and present himself as the solution to the problem.
 - c. If you look closely, you will see that humility is the dominant character quality in those who are in the church to learn, grow, and serve. And if you look a little closer, you will see that pride, and the self-exaltation that comes along with pride are the dominant character qualities in those who use the church as a place to be seen as someone important and in a position of honor.
 - d. Can you spot pride in the teacher or preacher or Bible study leader or worship leader or Christian author? One easy way to spot pride is if the person repeatedly and in a self-exalting way talks about themselves. Another way is if they promote themselves and their ministry as what you need.
4. My point in these two examples from our own church is to show how easy it is to stray from Biblical spirituality into thinking more highly of yourself than you ought and in so doing, become self-seeking and self-exalting.
 - a. And when that happens in any church, the spiritual health of the church and the believers who attend is not just compromised, it is seriously harmed.
5. Whatever your level of discernment regarding Christian leaders, teachers, authors, musicians, Bible Study leaders, and the like, you can improve it by living up to what you know today.
 - a. The more you experience the challenges and demands of dealing with sin in your life, gaining victory over it, and putting on Christ-likeness, the more you will be able discern whose teaching is good sounding yet empty of value for spiritual growth, and whose teaching is full of life and value for godliness because he has lived and is living according to what he is teaching.
 - b. The more your mind is transformed and the less your thinking and reasoning and living is conformed to this world, the more you will know whose teaching or speaking or writing is shallow

and empty and whose is spiritually deep, genuinely helpful, and therefore worthy of your attention.

- c. And the more you care about the spiritual health of our church, the more you will seek to know if those leading and teaching live at home and in the workplace what they teach.
6. Good teachers and leaders are those who are spiritually fit for the position or role they have been given.
 - a. They may not be the best speakers or worship leaders or writers, but they will be able to lead you to where you need to go as a Christian because they have gone there themselves.
 - b. It is true, being gifted by the Holy Spirit for specific areas of Christian ministry and service is important, but it is never as important as a godly life.
 - c. “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. [2] If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing” (1 **Corinthians 13:1-2**).

III. Conclusion

- A. What we have talked about today is not as popular of a teaching topic and practice among Christians as it ought to be. And it is only going to get worse.
- B. God’s word says that a time will come when the church will become shallow and its teaching of little spiritual value. We read this in **2 Timothy 4:3-4**, “For the time will come when [church attendees] will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, [4] and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.”
- C. Let us never think that this can’t happen here. Therefore, let us pray and observe and discern and work at preventing this from happening here, for God’s sake, for His kingdom’s sake, for the gospel’s sake, for our church’s sake, for your sake, and for my sake.