

Good morning.

Our reading today is 1 Timothy 1, 3 through 7.

As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

The aim of our charge is to love issues from a pure heart and good conscience and a sincere faith.

Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

Thanks, Jared.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, I just ask that you open our eyes to see your goodness, your beauty, your mercy again this morning.

And Lord, that you would teach us to trust you, to trust your word.

to trust the means by which you have communicated yourself to us, Lord, and that you would just draw us into deeper fellowship and relationship with you and with each other as we open your word this morning.

Lord, we need your help.

We don't gravitate to these things naturally in our sin nature.

Lord, we are still battling with the old man.

So we just ask that you would open our eyes to see and that you would do your work through your Holy Spirit in us from the inside out.

We pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Have you ever noticed that you typically know nothing about your doctor, especially if they're like a specialist?

You know, like you go in there, you walk in, you sit down, they kind of introduce themselves.

If you're lucky, they'll give you, you know, their name.

And it's right into your symptoms and all of your charts and numbers.

And, you know, they start asking you questions and talking about you.

You know, and as you get older, typically speaking, there's like big decisions about your life that you've got to make based on the advice that they're giving.

And like, you don't even know if the guy's a Bills fan or not.

I mean, he could be some horrible person, like a Patriots fan.

Or worse, he could think that Popeye's chicken is better than Chick-fil-A, and he's going to be advising you on whether or not you need open-heart surgery.

There's a lot we don't know about these people that we're taking all of this advice from.

And so why do we accept this?

Why do we go along and play this game?

Well, there's generally a theory or just kind of an understanding within science that what matters are the facts, the data points, and not necessarily the messenger or the person that's giving you those facts and data points.

Somehow I turned Siri on and she's listening.

I don't want this on the internet.

All right.

Actually, we're streaming it, so too late.

What matters are the facts, not the messenger in science.

And in certain fields, that's okay.

Facts, data points, we'll deal with that stuff.

And who's delivering them or interpreting them, not so much important as long as they're objective to the facts and what's true about those facts.

But for some reason, we've, I think, especially in our modern age, in the age of social media, where we, you know, anybody can upload anything at any time, we've kind of adopted this approach to our Bible teachers, right?

The people who are teaching us about the Lord, and in particular, about His Word.

And I think that the thinking seems to be that, you know, I've got my Bible, and that's all I need to discern the truth of their message.

So just give me the ideas, give me the arguments, and I can discern with my Bible whether or not these arguments are true or not.

And we give very little thought to what we don't know about the person teaching us.

How little we can possibly know about their character, their personality, their lives.

This is a big deal to Paul here in 1 Timothy.

He's going to spend his whole first chapter addressing heretical teaching in the Ephesian church, heretical teaching that was brought in by elders, a couple of their elders.

He's going to name a few at the end of the chapter.

And he spends this book, the book of Titus, and a little bit of 2 Timothy really underscoring the fact that in order for you to trust someone who's bringing you God's word or to trust teaching, you've got to both look at the content, the soundness of their doctrine,

but also their integrity and their character.

Both of these things are essential in discerning the truth and trustworthiness of someone who's bringing you God's word and teaching you God's word and about God from his word.

We'll see faith and love as two essential things that are mentioned together as a pair more often in the pastoral epistles than anywhere else in the scripture.

The messenger matters, right?

The messenger isn't everything, but Paul's communicating that who leads and who teaches, their character matters more so than even their ability.

We'll look at this when we get to qualifications for deacons and elders in a couple months.

It's gonna be a little while.

But character, the messenger, who brings it matters.

And today, Paul's going after and going after the heresy that's being taught in the Ephesians church

He lays the groundwork for addressing the heresy by addressing the people who are teaching this false doctrine.

So we'll look at it positively.

We're going to look at what he says about these false teachers, but we'll kind of flip it on its head and talk about it a little positively and say that true pastors of God's flock and teachers of God's word are recognizable by the integrity that God's word produces.

True pastors and teachers of God's word are recognizable by the integrity that God's word produces.

So true teachers, we'll see here first.

I'm going to go kind of out of order.

I think we'll see three things that Paul says about the false teachers and by inference, what's true about true teachers.

I'm going to go a little out of order.

We'll come back to kind of verse three a little bit later.

But the first thing,

that we see clearly that Paul's saying in these couple of verses about true teachers is that they promote the stewardship from God.

Look at verses three and four again.

As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

So the first thing that Paul makes clear about false teachers here is that they obscure clear teaching in God's word to promote their own ideas.

Paul, right out of the gate here in 1 Timothy, he doesn't thank God for the Ephesian church like he normally does when he writes a letter.

He doesn't even thank God for Timothy.

He gets right to business because the business that he's got to get to is urgent.

As Paul warned back in Acts 20, if you go back to the first sermon that we preached last week about 1 Timothy to give some context.

In Acts 20, Paul meets with the Ephesian elders and he warns them at that time.

He says, wolves are going to rise up among you.

They're going to bring in false teaching, false doctrine in your midst.

Beware, look out.

stay true to the gospel that Christ has given his apostles and that we've given to you, right?

So he says, it's coming, and it did.

Now, I'm not gonna take time to unpack all of the details about this heresy because we just get bits and pieces in 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy.

Paul doesn't go into a lengthy correction of the teaching itself like he does in Galatians.

There's a separate heresy here

separate heretical teaching that was creeping into the church in Galatians.

And Paul spends most of that book going after the teaching itself and correcting the teaching.

What's unique about 1 Timothy here is he spends little to no time helping Timothy correct the teaching.

It's implied that Timothy already knows how to do that, but he spends a lot of time reminding Timothy of the importance of godliness and integrity amongst those who are teaching and leading God's flock.

So we're not going into the details, but we do see clearly though in Titus and in a little bit here in 1 Timothy that these false teachers were Jewish in background and they were most certainly, almost certainly, or how do you say that?

Almost certainly, there we go.

Elders within the Ephesian church.

He names two of them at the end of the chapter.

We'll look at that in a second.

But he also leaves the door open here in verse three with this certain persons are teaching, meaning that there's probably more than just the two that he names at the end of the chapter.

So again, we'll come back to verse three and look at the details in a little bit, but what we need to see here as we move into kind of the foundation of these false teachers and kind of like what's at the heart and how to recognize false teachers is that these myths and genealogies that they were teaching were stories that were taken from other literature, other religions, and in some cases made up on their own

and plugged into the genealogical lists in the Old Testament.

So in the Old Testament, you got so-and-so begat so-and-so begat so-and-so begat so-and-so, and there's a whole list of genealogies.

And they're pulling names out of this list, and they're like, actually, let me tell you this secret story about this guy that's in this list, and let me tell you why that's so important for your life today.

So they're making up these stories or pulling in stories from other

less credible sources, and plugging them into the Old Testament genealogies where that person's only mentioned

like one time in the Old Testament, really for a completely different purpose than what they were pulling their name out for.

This is why Paul calls them speculations, right?

He says, listen, all this stuff is really unknowable about these people.

Their names weren't included in the scriptures for the purpose of you pulling out these myths and stories.

And the scriptures includes those genealogies for other clear purposes that you're ignoring.

You're just speculating about this tiny little minute detail for your own selfish gain.

We'll look at how that plays out in a second.

But this really hasn't changed much, right?

Pulling out small, deep, small, obscure details of the Bible and kind of obscuring clear things in the Bible with small, unknowable details.

People are still doing that today, right?

People still, you know, we gravitate to the strange, to the obscure things mentioned in the Bible or things that are like Bible adjacent, like the Da Vinci Code or something like that.

And we latch on to them, obsess over them.

Paul says that they devote themselves to them, right?

They're all after these obscure details while ignoring the plain truth, the plain meaning of the text that's right in front of them.

I don't know if you've heard of the Bible code.

It was like these hidden messages in the original text.

Like if you just get all of the letters from the original Hebrew and you just make a grid out of it.

And then you like go over six, six this way and six up this way.

You'll spell out the name Hitler and that will tell you that he was the Antichrist at that time.

Like it's just...

obsessing over obscure details that the original author who wrote the text for the original audience never intended to communicate.

I mean, how many times have we heard, you know, specific teaching about small little details in the book of Daniel or John's prophecy in Revelation

that clearly name Hitler, Stalin, or I'm not going to go into modern names now just because it'll get aggregated and whatever, and I'll get emails.

But, you know, like so-and-so is the Antichrist because, you know, the locusts are really the face of a helicopter.

And that means that, you know, the helicopter was invented under Hitler's rule.

And that means just pulling out tiny details while ignoring the main point, right?

The main point of the passage.

More subtly though, that tends to be kind of like a conservative pitfall, right?

Like if you kind of lean right, lean conservative, you tend to, if you're going to go off the rails, you tend to go off the rails that way.

If you lean more progressive, you tend to go off the rails by just overly contextualizing things.

If you really study the historical context at the time, hospitality was a big deal in ancient days.

If you weren't hospitable, that was really offensive.

You didn't do it.

So really, God's destruction on Sodom and Gomorrah, not about sexual immorality, it's more about the fact that this city wasn't hospitable to the two visitors.

Or, you know, a big one is like Second Temple Judaism.

You know, if you just understood how, you know, the Jews under Second Temple Judaism understood sacrifices, you would realize that Jesus didn't really die as a substitute.

He died as an example, right?

Because they wouldn't have seen that sacrifice.

So you just, you're pulling out details that are Bible-adjacent.

or scripture adjacent or tiny little details in the scripture and using them as a platform to ignore the plain clear teaching of the text.

So false teachers take obscure details and they obscure the clear meaning of the text so that they can promote their own ideas.

While sound teaching, on the other hand, spotlights God and his entrusted gospel.

Look at verse 4.

Look at verse 4 again.

He says, Rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

The implication with that last phrase there in verse four is that Timothy and other true teachers of the word ought to be and were promoting the stewardship of God that comes by faith.

It's like, yeah, you're doing a good job.

Keep doing it, right?

Promote the stewardship of God that comes by faith.

What is this stewardship?

What does he mean by stewardship?

Paul doesn't use it a ton.

He uses it a little bit in Ephesians, like Ephesians chapter three, one to two.

He says, "'For this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, on behalf of you Gentiles, assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you.'"

And then a little bit later, in verses eight and nine, he says, "'To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan or stewardship,' same word in the Greek, "'of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things.'"

So the stewardship here is God's plan.

It's his mode of salvation.

It's the good news of the gospel, right?

So it's the good news of what God has done in a time and place in history that he's entrusted to his church to protect and proclaim, right?

So the church has a responsibility to protect the gospel message, but also...

to be free with it and proclaim it to the nations.

So the big difference here between these false teachers and true teachers is that one promotes God's gospel and the other promotes speculation.

So if we were to elaborate on that a little bit, is that the gospel is not my idea or your idea.

The whole point here is that I didn't come up with the gospel.

You didn't come up with the gospel.

It's not my unique and clever insight into some obscure details that I somehow came up in my cleverness or special relationship with God to tell you.

The gospel is clear.

It's understandable.

It's truth that was entrusted to the church.

Yes, while Paul had a special vision from God and he was taught in the wilderness for a certain amount of years, his message was not uniquely his.

It was a message that was given by Jesus to the apostles and to the church.

And Paul's teachings were actually tested by the writings of the other apostles and the Old Testament scriptures that came before him.

It's not just one unique guy saying,

speculating on something, inventing things on his own.

It's an entrustment, right?

It's something that is a stewardship that's been given to Paul.

So true teachers, they don't obscure God's word to promote their own ideas.

They humbly shine a spotlight on God and his gospel
to promote a gift that they've received, right?

I'm pointing you back to God's word.

I'm pointing you back to something that God has given his church.

So it's my job to help explain this thing that God has given his church.

So let me just ask you this morning, we'll take a break, take a breath here for a second, because we're preaching, right?

We're going.

Why are you listening to the teachers and commentators that you listen to?

Why do you choose them, right?

So I think listening to people is good, right?

Listening to podcasts, listening to teachers, reading books, good thing to do.

Why do you pick the teachers and the commentators that you do?

Is it because he or she is super smart and articulate and they really beat up on the bad guys and they have such a unique way of putting things?

Or are you listening to them because they draw your attention to God, to his church, and what God is doing, how he's putting his glory on display in the world?

Another way to put it, another test, is who's on your mind when you turn the podcast, the show off, or when you put the book down?

We want speakers, we want authors that leave us looking at God and how he's at work in the world through his word.

Not drawing attention to themselves or to negativity all the time.

Drawing attention to God.

Just a test.

It's not a perfect test.

It's my test that I made up.

But off of these principles, I would encourage you to think it through and possibly use it.

All right, but not only do true teachers promote the stewardship that's from God, but also we see that true teachers take up the charge with integrity, right?

So they take up this charge with integrity.

Paul says here in verse five, let's read verse five.

The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

So Paul says right up front that the aim of this charge, their charge, is love.

The goal is love.

Real quick, we gotta answer the question, what is this charge?

What is Timothy and Paul's charge here?

Well, it most immediately refers back to verse three, right?

Verse three says, Paul tells them, I urge you, when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus, so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine.

So charge is used there, but that's actually the second time it's been used in this book already.

Because if you go up to verse one, Paul says, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by command or by charge of God our Savior and Christ Jesus our hope.

So Paul has in mind here first this rebuke, right?

This command that Timothy is to give to the false teachers.

But this command is flowing out of a command that Paul and Timothy have received themselves, right?

So Paul's thinking about, one, this very specific situation where we've got to tell these guys to back off and actually a couple of them to go away.

We'll talk about that more later.

But he's also thinking about the job and the calling that God has given he and Timothy to do to lead in this way.

So they're to conduct this position, this authority, this responsibility, and in particular, this rebuke that they're supposed to give, they're to conduct this with the goal of love, right?

The point of this charge, the point of the command that Timothy was to give, and the point of them being put in this position of authority in the first place is love, right?

It's love on a number of different levels, right?

Love demonstrated in protecting the congregation from false teaching and helping the congregation to see the error of these speculations that are being passed around.

It's also love demonstrated to the false teachers that they got to rebuke and a couple of them that they got to excommunicate, at least for the time.

It's love demonstrated to the false teachers in seeking to correct them and to keep them from traveling further down this road of speculation and delusion and experiencing the consequences of living by lies.

But most importantly,

It's a charge that's to be conducted out of love for God and his truth and a commitment of fidelity to him and his glory.

We're not going to compromise the gospel, the glorious gospel that he has given us and entrusted us with.

So a true teacher recognizes that when they must speak with authority and exercise the charge, that authority that God has given them, verse 1,

The goal is not to, first and foremost, annihilate the opposition.

The goal is, first and foremost, conversion and repentance.

Love seeks what's best for the other person, which sometimes looks like a difficult word and a rebuke, and even, in the case of Matthew 18, excommunication.

But the goal in all of those, the word of rebuke, even excommunicating someone, the goal is to wake that person up who's caught in speculation and delusion and gladly welcome them back in repentance.

If they return and repent and come back to the Lord, glad to have them back among us.

So this isn't, this love isn't like a shallow, mushy sentiment, right?

It's a deep, strong love that Paul says flows out of and is backed up by a life of integrity.

He says from a pure heart, good conscience, and a sincere faith.

A pure heart, Soren Kierkegaard puts it this way, purity of heart is to will one thing, or purity of heart is to desire one thing.

I would add that it's a desire for the greatest thing, right?

To desire the greatest thing as that one thing, which would be God.

In other words, it's an undivided heart.

And when it comes to teaching, influencing, leading, there's a handful of really potent forces that are tugging at our heartstrings to pull us away from an undivided heart set on God.

Fame, affirmation, power, all of these things suddenly and rather quickly can pull our hearts away from being wholly devoted to the Lord.

So authority, Paul says, must be exercised from an undivided, a pure heart that loves God like nothing else.

He also says good conscience, which good conscience just means that our actions match our convictions and that pure love for God, right?

That we have an undivided heart towards God, but our actions match those convictions and that love for God.

And sincere faith literally means faith without hypocrisy, right?

We're consistent in our beliefs and doctrines.

This is more of like a systematic doctrine.

type thing that he's talking about here.

That you don't say one thing and then also say another thing that contradicts that thing.

That our belief system is consistent and without hypocrisy.

And you can't pick and choose here.

Paul doesn't let us pick and choose.

He says, the goal is love, but love that flows from a head, a heart, and a life of integrity.

Again, let me pause.

and ask, do you see this kind of love in the teachers and commentators you're listening to?

Or does it seem like they're mostly out to put down and annihilate other opponents?

Do the people you're listening to demonstrate consistency and integrity with their life and their actions?

And I think this is where we've got to acknowledge that the Internet's not too helpful here, because how do you know?

We see very little of the talking heads on the internet.

And yet, I'm just speaking from personal experience here.

I'm not yelling at anybody here.

This is what I observe about our life these days.

And yet, we listen to those people the most.

Daily, usually.

So the love and integrity that Paul's talking about here in verse five is essential for qualifying someone to teach and lead God's church.

And quite frankly, the further removed we are from the teacher, the less certain we can be of their qualifications to teach us and instruct us and to give us God's word.

We must be as certain and like, you all know me to a degree, you see my life, we spend time together, you have my access to my family, but I understand that none of us are certain about what's going on in each other's hearts.

Like I said, the further we get away, the more we're introducing danger and less certainty into the mix.

But we've got to be as certain as we can be, right, of these qualifications.

Because, Paul says, departing from love rooted in purity, right, departing from love rooted in purity, conscience, and faith is what causes us to swerve and go off the rails.

Look at verses six to seven.

Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

We just need to notice here that what's behind vain discussions, what's behind the speculations that Paul's telling Timothy to charge the other people against is not primarily confusion.

It's not primarily misunderstanding.

It's not an intellectual problem.

Rather, the root problem is that they've departed from love with integrity.

They've departed from love with faith.

And they've departed it for a selfish desire to be known as a teacher.

that they want to be known as a teacher, and they've departed from love as the foundation.

Jesus told us, he told us, knock and the door will be open, seek, you will find.

Listen, if we're driven by a pure desire to know God, and we're doing the work necessary to grow in our knowledge with him, he will walk with us through growing in our knowledge with him.

Gaining the understanding, learning about God, the intellectual side is not going to be a problem.

He'll help us through that.

He will teach us what we can know about him through his people, through the Holy Spirit, through his word.

If we really are driven by a pure desire to know him, God will reveal himself to us through his word.

He'll help us to see.

He's given us all the tools.

He's given us all the tools we need to know him.

It's not an intellectual problem.

Rather, it's a heart problem.

And as I've said before, this isn't the first time I'm saying it, but pride is a form of insanity, right?

We're not seeing the reality of who we are and are not.

Everybody around a proud person knows it.

They're like, yeah, this guy's got a huge ego.

He does not see himself.

He's got a big head.

He thinks of himself way higher than he actually is.

He thinks he's way cooler than he actually is.

It's a form of insanity.

You're not seeing yourself correctly.

That distortion of reality, how you see yourself, won't end with just how you view yourself.

It will continue to grow and distort how we view the world.

In other words, the absence of truth

will be filled by just about anything.

I mean, just think about what's going on here.

Like, who would be interested in making up stories about random names in the genealogies when you got this beautiful story of redemption that's sitting right there in the scriptures?

We've been walking through the Old Testament, and it's just beautiful how God is unfolding his love for his people, choosing for his people, caring for his people.

Yes, there's hard things that come in life, but you meant it for evil, God meant it for good, we just saw in Joseph.

We've got this beautiful story of redemption, and yet I'd rather play around with Jehoshaphat, somebody or other, in the genealogy and make up a story about him.

It's crazy, right?

It's crazy.

But the absence of truth and the intoxicating effects of pride will have us grasping for anything.

When we're not seeing the world rightly and the beauty of the truth is gone, we'll grab anything to fill that void.

Without godly character, without love, with integrity, we can't rightly understand the truth in its entirety, especially the truth about God.

True pastors of God's flock and teachers of God's word are recognizable by the integrity that God's word produces.

We'll be able to recognize true teachers of God's word by the beauty of the integrity that God's word produces.

Listen, all media is tough.

I've been around on social media a little bit, but we need to think clearly about its role and its place in our life.

Again, the problem is,

with authors and commentators and influencers is that you can't know them, they can't know you.

That doesn't mean that there isn't any value to reading a good book.

Please read books.

Doesn't mean that there's not value to listening to podcasts or listening to sermons online.

By all means, listen to podcasts, sermons, all that stuff.

But we've got to be careful how much weight and how much influence we give them in our lives.

All media, social media especially, requires a heavy dose of promotion.

If you're gonna become popular online, or if you're gonna become a pastor or a speaker with national influence, that requires promotion.

And I think that generally, this is me, not the Lord speaking, this is me applying the principle, but I think it needs to be said out loud.

I think that generally we wanna avoid speakers, teachers, people who promote themselves, who say ridiculous things for attention.

who attack famous people so that they can be famous themselves or who relish and advertise when famous opponents call them out because that adds to their credibility, right?

Those are signs of at least the beginnings of pride and a departure from love with integrity.

So let's be careful.

I'm not old, I'm not 40 yet, but I've been around

I've been around national Christian influencers.

I don't know anybody in particular, but I've watched, you know, for 20 or so years now.

And

seeing guys where there were signs all along who were promoting themselves, putting themselves out there, using even ungodly means to promote themselves.

And eventually it comes to light, right?

Eventually it comes to light.

But you kind of develop a little bit of a sense of what that looks like.

John Piper,

Al Mohler and Mark Dever were on a panel at a T4G conference, and none of those guys are perfect either, just not holding them out there as perfect examples of godliness.

But they were at a T4G conference, and they were asked, should a pastor desire a national platform, and how should he go about gaining a national platform, that kind of influence?

Their combined answer stuck with me a little bit, and as men who had national platforms, I thought was insightful.

They said, basically, no pastor should desire a national platform.

Just get that out of your head.

Pastor the flock that God has given you.

If other people find your teaching helpful and they promote it and they ask you to come and speak, pray about the opportunity, have godly friends that will keep your pride in check and work hard to keep the attention with that influence on God and his grace that you don't deserve in the first place.

And I know Piper, I mean, you can look up some of his stuff online.

He talks very openly about the seductive nature of fame and having a national platform and having to step away at times from it.

I think you want guys and ladies that are open about that, right, who are open about kind of the behind the scenes stuff that goes on with all of the inner workings of a national platform and how those things work.

I think that's a good sign.

That's a healthy sign.

Bottom line, though, we ought to prioritize our local church community where we know the teachers better than online anyways, right?

And our teachers know us.

There's no substitute for that, or there's no substitute for the people that are bringing you God's word every week, knowing you and you knowing them.

And we as a church and an elder board, just looking at these few couple verses, we need to be ready to command that no one teach a strange or different doctrine and be ready to give that command from a place of love and integrity.

A place that looks to not annihilate, but to call to repentance and to change, but which stands firm in the truth and bring that charge with love and with integrity.

Charles Bridges, who wrote a book on Christian ministry, puts it this way.

He says, It may be generally remarked that unless our work exhibit the self-denying character of the cross of Christ, it is the Christian ministry in letter only, not in spirit.

It is not the work that God has engaged to bless.

Let's pray.

Lord,

I preach this sermon with fear and trembling, in a sense, because I know my shortcomings and my flaws.

I know the guys on the elder board pretty well, gotten to know them pretty well over these last three years.

I know we have shortcomings and flaws and that we depend on your grace every day.

But Lord, I pray that you would keep us moving more and more into leading your church from a place of love with integrity, Lord, a place of love that flows from a pure heart, a good conscience, and Lord, a consistent faith, faith without hypocrisy.

And Lord, I thank you that there's mercy and grace and that Christ is building his church.

And Lord, I just pray that you would help us to, as your people, to demand and look for these things from those who are teaching us your word.

Lord, that we would take doctrine and what you share with us and tell us from your word seriously.

Lord, that we would guard our hearts and guard our minds.

Lord, not by cutting everything off, but by learning with discernment and giving proper weight to those who know us and know them and to those who, as far as we can discern, are living what they preach, Lord.

And Lord, I pray that you would help us to take all of these things, to grow in them for your honor and for your glory.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name, amen.