

**Title: A Mature Church Is Careful of False Teachers**

**Text: 1 Timothy 1:3-7**

*Good morning, everyone! I have some exciting news to share with you today. I've recently come across a powerful message that promises that if we have enough faith, God will bless us with wealth, health, and success.*

*It's simple: if we give generously to the church and trust in God's power, we are guaranteed prosperity in all areas of life. We should expect nothing but abundance because we're children of the King, and He wants to shower us with riches and success.*

*If you face hardships or illness, it's likely because you're not demonstrating enough faith. So let's all commit to a greater level of faith and giving, and watch the blessings flow!*

Now, before you start to question everything I've just said, let me be clear: the message I just shared is false. It's a classic example of the prosperity gospel, a teaching that suggests that faith automatically leads to wealth, health, and success.

But the Bible doesn't support this view. In fact, Jesus warned about the love of money ([1 Timothy 6:10](#)), and He Himself lived a humble life without worldly riches. The Christian journey is about faith, obedience, and following Christ, not about a guaranteed path to prosperity.

Let's take a moment to explore the dangers of false teachings and why it's crucial to study the Word carefully to avoid being led astray.

Timothy was now the Pastor at the church of Ephesus. Apparently, Paul wanted him to be there because they had some challenges, especially in the area of false teachers and he needed to be the one who confronted this heresy. Knowing a little bit about Timothy, we know that he was not the bold lion of a man that Paul was. He wrestled with timidity.

In 2nd Timothy, Paul gives great encouragement to Timothy with these words...

**2 Timothy 1:6-7 ESV**

*For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*

Paul could not have false teaching take place in the church at Ephesus and his protégé, his son in the faith, the one he led to Christ and disciplined in Christ would need to be the one to confront this.

The question is, how would Paul have Timothy go about this?

Certainly, Timothy trafficked in the TRUTH.

But all truth with no love can be harsh and cold.

All love without truth is gushy, fluffy, and not helpful

But truth and love together is what the church must be about because it is God's way of problem solving!

**Ephesians 4:15 ESV**

*Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,*

And if there is one thing I want you to understand this morning it is this...

**Main Idea: Truth and Love are the Church's Trajectory!**

In other words, when it comes to confronting problems, like false teachers, it must be dealt with in love and truth...

Paul gives three powerful actions that must happen when dealing with false teachers in particular. And remember, each of these is under the umbrella of truth and love!

**1. False Doctrine Must Be Confronted (vs. 3-4)**

*"West Michigan Nice"* - that's what Dave Searles calls it. It's the passive/aggressive way of problem solving. We say things like, *"Well, I guess late is the new on-time for you."*

This comment indirectly criticizes someone's punctuality without coming right out and articulating the problem in a mature way with the goal of helping the person grow and change.

or

*"Oh, you're doing it that way? I suppose that works too."*

This subtly implies that there might be a better way to do something, without directly saying so.

Okay, to be clear, this is not the way to go about solving problems in the church.

Why do we resort to such childish communicative tactics?

Because we don't like confrontation (Well, most of us don't, but some of us like it a bit too much)!

And because we don't like confrontation, we tend to let a lot slide. Some of it because of grace and mercy, but, if we are going to be honest, we let stuff slide because we don't like confrontation.

Now, Paul is dealing with something that is definitely wrong. In fact you can't get much more serious of a wrong than false teaching.

So, in areas of Christian liberties, we have grace upon grace with one another.

But, in areas of Doctrine - especially primary doctrines, we must hold fast to the truth. And when false teachings are being promoted by false teachers, we cannot resort to childish "problem solving" techniques. We must confront it.

This is why Paul left Timothy in Ephesus...

**1 Timothy 1:3-4 ESV**

*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.*

It is most likely that before Paul left for Macedonia, he started to deal with these “certain persons” to get them out of leadership positions.

By the way, this is what a pastor/elder does. God is a God of order, not of chaos. The elder leadership of a church is to eliminate chaos and set forth order.

These are the very words Paul uses when encouraging the church in Corinth.

**1 Corinthians 14:40 ESV**

*But all things should be done decently and in order.*

And there is nothing more disorderly in the church of Jesus Christ than false doctrine and those that promote it. Jesus, warned about it...

**Matthew 7:15 ESV**

*“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.*

**Matthew 24:11 ESV**

*And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.*

Peter warned about this...

**2 Peter 2:1 ESV**

*But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.*

Paul warned about this as well...

**Acts 20:29–30 ESV**

*I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.*

While Paul doesn’t give a lot of detail to the exact nature of the false teachings, we can surmise it has to do with legalistic Judaism because as verse 7 indicates, these people desired to be “teachers of the law”

Look at verse 3 again...

**1 Timothy 1:3 ESV**

*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,*

Paul “urged” or “exhorted” Timothy to stay in Ephesus. This speaks a lot to the character of Timothy that he was in humble submission to the Apostle Paul and ultimately to God.

While Paul was away in Macedonia, he urged Timothy to stay at Ephesus to “charge” or “order” these false teachers to cease and desist.

Now I want you to notice this. Timothy, the pastor/elder is urged by Paul to “order” or “command” those who are teaching what is false to stop.

There is no sense here in this passage that Timothy is to beat around the bush or to give a lot of grace. No, he is to make short order of this. He is to *“nip it in the bud”* as soon as possible.

There are certain things in the church of Jesus Christ we can be long suffering on. People’s off-putting personalities, one off sin events, etc.

But there is one thing that needs to be dealt with post haste and that is people teaching *“any different doctrine.”* It needs to be rooted out right away because false doctrine will destroy a church.

But look at what else Paul says in verse 4...

**1 Timothy 1:4 ESV**

*nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.*

Again, these activities have a Jewish root to them.

*“The false teachers emphasized myths and endless genealogies. Religious fables, fictionalized accounts of many OT characters, and the theological speculations that accompanied them were common in the literature of early Judaism and were features of the gnostic heresy in the second century as well.” - TMBC, Rydelnik and Vanlaningham*

What was the result of spending so much time on these myths and endless genealogies? Speculations!

Paul did not want the church at Ephesus to “devote” their lives to these things because they would only lead to speculation instead of action. He had a similar admonition for Titus...

**Titus 1:14 ESV**

*not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.*

As followers of Christ we are not to be bogged down by speculative theological conundrums. Why? Because they lead nowhere.

And so, you spend all of your time on dead end speculations rather than obeying what the word of God says.

For example, would you rather have a long and drawn out discussion with your brothers and sisters in Christ debating about man's free will verses God's sovereignty or share the gospel with your neighbor?

If we are going to be honest, most of us would pick the first one.

But God is not interested in knowledge the puffs up. Rather he wants us to be equipped to DO THE MINISTRY.

Now my illustration of man's free will and God's sovereignty are not unbiblical things to know and discuss.

But if that is all we do, to the exclusion of obeying Christ in all areas of life, well that is not good.

But Paul is actually talking about those who are promoting unbiblical teachings in the church.

Well this requires not only discernment as to what is biblical, but the willingness to confront those who would dare preach and teach that which is not sound doctrine.

While this is the responsibility of every believer - the responsibility ensuring this happens falls squarely on the shoulders of the pastors/elders of any given local church.

#### **Hebrews 13:17 ESV**

*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

The pastors / elders are given authority in the local church to hold themselves and the congregation accountable for right doctrine.

A mature church doesn't let this slide - even for a minute. And if false doctrine starts to creep in, it must be snuffed out right away!

*"We need to cultivate a healthy skepticism toward everything that cannot be supported by the plain teaching of the Bible. Belief is faith only when it has God's revealed truth for its object; beyond that it may be fully as injurious as unbelief itself." - A. W. Tozer*

So many purport to be truthful, but they are ungodly and demonic systems that actually lead people away from the God who loves them.

For example...

**Mormonism** is compelling because it uses the bible Just like **Jehovah's Witnesses**.

They use the bible for credibility and they misuse it for their own agenda.

These are obvious cults but there are false teaching out there that are more beguiling and dangerous.

**The Word of Faith Movement** = The "Word of Faith" movement is a Christian theological perspective that emphasizes the belief in the power of speech to manifest physical and financial blessings, often criticized for its prosperity gospel focus and claims that faith can directly influence material reality.

**The Prosperity Gospel** = is a controversial Christian doctrine that teaches financial blessing and physical well-being are always the will of God for them, and that faith, positive speech, and donations to religious causes will increase one's material wealth.

This is why it is critical for us as a church to know and employ proper bible study techniques so we can be accurate in our interpretations. And when we do, we can sniff out false teachings right away!

Church - Know your doctrine! Learn right doctrine! Love right doctrine!

How? Equipping Classes (Fundamentals of the Faith), Hermeneutics.

Put yourself in the way of good doctrine.

Be intentional in learning from your "Paul" on how to know the truth.

And elders - When false doctrine come in - hit it fast and hit it hard. That is the most loving thing you can do.

**Contending for the truth of God is an act of love, not a sign of an absence of love.**

**R. C. Sproul**

**Review** - Truth and Love are the Church's Trajectory!

- False Doctrine Must Be Confronted

## **2. True Motives Must Be Pursued (vs. 5)**

What was Timothy's motive supposed to be as he pastored in Ephesus? Look at the text with me...

### **1 Timothy 1:5 ESV**

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

Paul "urged" or "commanded" Timothy to "remain in Ephesus to set things in order. False teaching was happening and Timothy had to deal with it ASAP. But how?

Paul tells him - "The aim of our charge for you to stay in Ephesus and take care of this mess is LOVE!

Do you see this? It is so crucial!

Love is ALWAYS the motivation even in the face of false teaching.

Where does this love come from? Well, Paul tells us right in verse 5...

1. A Pure Heart
2. A Good Conscience
3. A Sincere Faith

Each of these three are the result of being a Christian. And each of them have **love** at their core!

**Romans 13:8–10 ESV**

*Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

**Galatians 5:14 ESV**

*For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

**Ephesians 6:24 ESV**

*Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.*

True loving motives must be pursued. Paul wanted Timothy to set this correction with correct motives.

*I broke my ankle when I was 19. I broke it three places and it was a mess.*

*I was in excruciating pain. When I went to the ER, my foot was parallel with my leg. So the ER Doctor lovingly wrenched my foot back into a normal position and then pushed me up against the wall and locked my wheelchair in place to hold my foot in position.*

*The pain of him setting my ankle was so intense I thought I would pass out.*

*But it wasn't over.*

*The ER doctor recommended surgery because of the three breaks.*

*Dr. Hamatti became my new doctor and he would perform the surgery to put me back together.*

*Can you believe that Dr. Hamatti purposely took a scalpel and cut my ankle open? I was already in excruciating pain and he intentionally wounded me further!*

*How rude! He purposely did my body harm.*

*Not only that, he took a drill and drilled into my bones and put screws and pins into my ankle bones!*

*What kind of a monster purposefully inflicts this level of torture on someone.*

*Especially someone who was in such pain! What a jerk!*

*Now, let me tell you something. If Dr. Hamatti didn't do what he did 36 years ago, I would, at best be walking with a significant limp today.*

*Dr. Hamatti caused me great pain (after surgery was the worst)!*

***He wounded me significantly so that I would be significantly better!***

***He hurt me so I would be helped.***

**Proverbs 27:6 ESV**

*Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.*

Was Dr. Hamatti a loving friend to me those many years ago? ABSOLUTELY!

Pastor Timothy was left to **“set the bone”** if you will? He was left there by Paul to love these **“certain persons”** with truth. But he was to do it with the motivation of LOVE. A love that comes from Christ saving us and living within us. I'm certain it was painful for them to hear - but it was the loving thing for Timothy to do! Not only for them, but to protect the congregation as well!

What is your motivation when confronting false teaching and teachers? Anger? Frustration? Irritation? or a pure heart, good conscience, and a sincere faith.

This ought not to be and the pastor / elder must lead in firm graciousness.

**2 Timothy 2:23–26 (ESV)**

*Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.*

Perhaps you are thinking, wow, when it comes to false teachers, I have the wrong motive...

I want to change. I want to start seeing life and people through the eyes of Christ. What can I do?

Repent - purpose to agree with God.

Praise God - if you have right doctrine, the only reason you do is by the grace of God. So we don't look at those steeped in false teaching as the enemy.

We lovingly correct them because they are being used by the REAL enemy - Satan!

Don't forget what James said...

**James 5:19–20 ESV**



*My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*

So, don't think more highly of yourself than you ought to think. Instead be humble and be used by God to not only stand for truth, but love those outside the truth as well.

**Review** - Truth and Love are the Church's Trajectory!

- False Doctrine Must Be Confronted
- True Motives Must Be Pursued

### **3. Godly Teachers Must Be Committed to the Truth (vs. 6-7)**

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. And Jesus exhorted everyone who would hear him to *"know the truth because the truth would set you free."*

Consequently, leaders in each local church too must be committed to the TRUTH. They must be committed to Christ who is the truth.

#### **1 Timothy 1:6-7 ESV**

*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.*

Notice who shows up again in verse 6? "Certain persons."

Do you know who these people are?

John MacArthur believes these men were elders in the church. Elders that Timothy now had to deal with.

#### **The MacArthur Study Bible Chapter 1**

*The false teachers were few in number, yet had a wide influence. Several reasons point toward these men being elders in the church at Ephesus and in the churches in the surrounding region: 1) they presumed to be teachers (v. 7), a role reserved for elders (3:2; 5:17). 2) Paul himself had to excommunicate Hymenaeus and Alexander, which implies they occupied the highest pastoral positions. 3) Paul detailed the qualifications of an elder (3:1-7), implying that unqualified men, who needed to be replaced by qualified ones, were occupying those roles. 4) Paul stressed that sinning elders were to be publicly disciplined (5:19-22).*

These men were once enlightened, but now have deconstructed to the point of being heretical. And they were confident about it!

These people have swerved from the stewardship (management) of the gospel and all that goes with it. And they have wandered (great word) into vain or useless or unprofitable discussions.

In verse 7, Paul says that these men want to be teachers of the law (this has Jewish implications). Just like the Pharisees in the Gospels deemed themselves experts in the law, so these men had their same spirit.

The problem was, like the Pharisees in Jesus time, they too misunderstood the purpose of the Law.

First and foremost - the Law of God is good.

**Romans 7:7 ESV**

*What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."*

And this then shows the efficacy of the Law of God. The law is a picture of the sinless, exacting character of God.

If we are to have a right relationship with God, we must be flawless in following the Law. We must be wholly righteous in our character and life.

We may think we are pretty good until we are confronted by God's Law.

This is Paul's point in [Romans 7:7](#). Paul thought he was pretty good until the perfect holy law pointed out his problem with coveting. Look at the result...

**Romans 7:8 ESV**

*But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead.*

But...

**Romans 7:9–11 ESV**

*I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.*

So is the Law the problem? No way!

**Romans 7:12 ESV**

*So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*

The law isn't the problem, you and I are the problem. We are lawbreakers.

**1 Timothy 1:9 ESV**

*understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers,*

And anyone that thinks righteousness is achievable by oneself is deceived and the truth is not in them.

Their motive was not a motive of love, their motive was preeminence. They wanted to add the Law to the gospel which only creates a bondage God never wanted.

**Matthew 23:5–7 ESV**

*They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.*

Even later in this letter Paul warns about this kind of person within the church...

**1 Timothy 6:3–5 ESV**

*If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.*

**Allendale Baptist Church** - you must demand from the pastors/elders, this pulpit and from all areas of this Church that the Word of God is taught clearly, lovingly, powerfully, and effectively.

We must hear from God. God speaks from His Word. And when we hear His Word, we hear the truth.

Why is this so important? Because the Truth sets us free! Free from sin. Free from separation from God. Free from death.

**God's truth transforms God's people into God's image!**

Godly teachers must be committed to the truth - not just teaching it, as important as that is, but believing it and thus living it.

**To walk in the truth, imports a life of integrity, holiness, faithfulness, and simplicity—the natural product of those principles of truth which the gospel teaches, and which the Spirit of God enables us to receive.**

**Charles Spurgeon**

Are you committed to the truth? Not a half-hearted commitment, but totally committed to the truth of the Word of God. Committed to God's truth means you will live by God's truth. This kind of commitment will revolutionize your life.

**We must not just debate the truth, we must know the truth. If we would live free, we must not just know the truth, we must live in truth and we must become people of truth.**

**Os Guinness**

And the only way you can become people of truth is if you spend time with God, who is truth!

It is not sufficient to commune with the truth, for truth is impersonal. We must commune with the God of truth.

**William Greenough Thayer Shedd**

What steps are you taking in your life to grow into a person that is saturated with God and His truth.

**Set a Specific Time:** Determine a consistent time each day for Bible reading. It could be in the morning, during lunch, or before bed.

**Choose a Plan:** Follow a structured Bible reading plan. There are many available online or through Bible apps that offer daily readings, ranging from whole-year plans to topical studies.

**Use a Journal:** Write down reflections, insights, or prayers inspired by your reading. This helps with comprehension and allows you to track your spiritual journey over time.

**Scripture Memorization:** Choose verses or passages to memorize and meditate on throughout the day. This helps internalize God's word and makes it accessible in various situations.

**Get a buddy:** Find someone who will hold you to your reading, study, and memorization. If you are in a Connection Group, find a buddy in that group to work with. If you are not in a Connection Group - get in one and find a buddy in that group.

These five steps will help you grow in truth and will help you and this church be protected by the false teaching that always wants to creep into this body.

The best protection against error creeping into this body is that you, the Elders, and the congregation know the truth!

**Review** - Truth and Love are the Church's Trajectory!

- False Doctrine Must Be Confronted
- True Motives Must Be Pursued
- Godly Teachers Must Be Committed to the Truth

## **Conclusion**

In regard to false teaching and the false teacher...

The heretic is not a man who loves truth too much; no man can love truth too much. The heretic is a man who loves his truth more than truth itself. He prefers the half-truth that he has found to the whole truth which humanity has found.

**G. K. Chesterton**

Our Mission for our church must contain a commitment to pursue truth with everything we have.

We must recognize that God, the God who cannot lie, wrote a book ([Titus 1:2](#)).

And because our God is the very personification of truth, what He has written is true as well.

If we are to pursue truth with everything we have, then we need to look no further than His Holy Word!

But we must also be careful to never allow the cold, hard, truth make us cold and hard as well.

A truth which is only held in the intellect becomes hard, and arid and dry; and a man of whom this is true can never speak the truth in love.

**David Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

God's character is love and so must we be characterized by love as well. Even when it comes to false teachers.

So, there are two things for you to pursue this morning.

Know the Truth - know the truth so well, that you are able to know when something is false.

Be lovingly bold with the Truth - The most loving thing we can do for a false teacher is tell them the truth, appealing to them and reminding them that if they fail to hold to the gospel message, they will be lost eternally. Is there anything more loving than that?

Zeal for the truth must be balanced by love for people. Truth without love has no decency; it's just *brutality*. On the other hand, love without truth has no character; it's just *hypocrisy*.

**John F. MacArthur**

What if everyone in this body were committed to these two pursuits?

We would become a corporate force for righteousness.

What is your next step?