

Bible Study Guide

March 1, 2026

Series: Let the Church Be the Church

Title: What Has Your Attention Determines Your Direction

Text: 1 Timothy 4:1–8

Big Idea - In a distracted world, the church must guard the faith and train intentionally for godliness.

We live in a highly distracted era where distractions are engineered, not accidental. Our phones buzz, our schedules overflow, and we are often emotionally absent even when physically present. People rarely lose their faith in a dramatic moment; more often, they drift—trading depth for noise and discipline for convenience.

SECTION 1 - Apostasy Is Certain, Spiritual, and Subtle

Read: 1 Timothy 4:1–2

Paul begins with a phrase meant to arrest our attention: *“The Spirit clearly says.”* This is not speculation—it is a warning from the Holy Spirit. Some will depart from the faith, not suddenly, but subtly. Churches rarely choose apostasy; they drift into it by neglecting truth.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Paul emphasizes that this warning comes directly from the Holy Spirit?

2. In what ways can distraction slowly lead to spiritual drift rather than an obvious departure from faith?

3. How can believers grow in discernment without becoming cynical or fearful?

Key Truth - Sincerity is not enough. What protects the church is sound doctrine grounded in God’s Word and empowered by the Spirit.

SECTION 2 - Apostasy Distorts God's Good Gifts

Read: 1 Timothy 4:3–5

False teaching in Ephesus promoted a form of spiritual superiority through denying legitimate gifts of God. Paul exposes this distortion by affirming that God's creation is good and to be received with thanksgiving. The gospel does not call us to reject God's gifts but to receive them rightly—under Christ's lordship. False teaching often looks “more spiritual” than the gospel. It adds rules God never commanded and equates restriction with holiness. The truth of the gospel leads to gratitude, not fear.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think legalism can sometimes feel more “spiritual” than grace?

2. How does gratitude protect us from both indulgence and legalism?

3. What is one way you can intentionally receive God's gifts with greater thanksgiving?

Key Truth - The gospel produces gratitude, humility, and freedom under Christ's lordship—not fear, pride, or spiritual performance.

SECTION 3 - Church Leadership and the Discipline of Godliness

Read: 1 Timothy 4:6–8

Paul shifts from warning to calling. Leaders are to nourish the church with truth, and believers are to train for godliness. Godliness does not happen accidentally. Drift is automatic. Growth is intentional.

Paul uses athletic language: training requires discipline, repetition, and focus. Physical training has value, but godliness shapes both this life and eternity. What captures our attention will shape our direction.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is spiritual growth often slower than we expect when it is not intentional?

2. What habits are currently shaping your spiritual direction the most?

3. How can the church encourage training for godliness without creating pressure or legalism?

Key Truth - The habits you cultivate shape the future you are becoming.

THREE RESPONSES TO THE MESSAGE

1: A Call to Discernment - “What voices are shaping me?”

Application: This week, intentionally evaluate what you are allowing to shape your thinking—media, voices, influences, and habits. Identify one influence that competes with God’s Word for your attention and take a practical step to limit it.

2: Receive God’s Gifts with Thanksgiving

Application: Choose one area of life where you’ve tended toward guilt, fear, or performance. Practice receiving God’s gifts with gratitude and prayer. Begin each day this week by thanking God for one specific gift He has given you.

3: Build Godliness Through Intentional Practices

Application: Select one spiritual practice to strengthen this month (Scripture, prayer, Sabbath, fasting, accountability, service). Write it down and make a simple, realistic plan to practice it consistently this week.

Closing Encouragement - Let us be a people anchored in truth, nourished by the Word, and disciplined in pursuit of Christlikeness. What has your attention will shape your direction. May our attention be fixed on Christ, and our direction shaped by godliness.