in a World That Is Going Wrong

1 Timothy 4:1–16



Have you ever noticed how easy it is to drift away from something without realizing it? A boat doesn't have to do anything to drift downstream. It simply has to stop fighting the current. The same thing can happen to Christians and churches. We simply become less concerned about sound doctrine, less committed to holiness, less interested in God's Word, and less intentional about living for Christ. Before long, we find ourselves going in a direction we never intended to go.

Paul gives us three important instructions that every Christian and every church needs to hear.

1. Recognize the Danger of Spiritual Deception (vv. 1–5)



False teaching is not always obvious. Sometimes it sounds religious, uses Christian vocabulary, and even appears spiritual. Satan has always attempted to distort God's Word. Remember the Garden of Eden? "Did God really say...?" That is still one of his favorite strategies.

Paul describes false teachers as hypocritical liars whose consciences have been seared (v. 2). They had become so accustomed to rejecting truth that their consciences were no longer sensitive. Truth does not penetrate. False teaching always comes from people who are claiming to be spreading the truth.

Paul identifies some of their false teaching, which included forbidding marriage and requiring people to abstain from certain foods. Don't believe everything you hear from a preacher, podcast, author, or social media personality. Acts 17:11 commends the Bereans because they examined the Scriptures daily.

2. Pursue the Discipline of Spiritual Growth (vv. 6–10)



In verse 7, Paul gives Timothy a powerful command: "Train yourself to be godly." Spiritual growth doesn't happen accidentally. It requires intentional effort.

We need God's Word daily, not simply on Sunday mornings. Paul then uses an athletic illustration (vv. 7–8). A football player doesn't walk onto the field Friday night and suddenly develop the strength and endurance needed to compete. Physical training is of great value, but it should pale in comparison to what we do to train for godliness and righteousness. Are you intentionally growing spiritually?

3. Demonstrate the Evidence of Spiritual Maturity (vv. 11–16)



Paul now turns to Timothy's personal conduct and ministry. In verse 12, he tells Timothy not to let anyone look down on him because he is young, but to set an example for believers in speech, life, love, faith, and purity. Our lives leave footprints, too. Our children, grandchildren, coworkers, and neighbors are watching. What are our footprints leading them?

In verses 13–14, Paul instructs Timothy to devote himself to the public reading of Scripture, preaching, and teaching. Sometimes God's Word comforts us, sometimes it confronts us, and sometimes it corrects us. But we need all of it.

Finally, Paul tells Timothy to be diligent and give himself wholly to these matters so that everyone may see his progress (v. 15). Then he gives this important instruction in verse 16: *"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them..."*

Don't Drift – Stand Firm!