

Good morning and Merry Christmas to you! I trust that you had a wonderful Christmas with your friends and family. I am so blessed to bring you the Word of the Lord this beautiful morning. This church is a gift, and each of you are great gifts from God- there is no greater treasure in heaven than you and Christ within you. If you have had a lonely Christmas this year, I pray that you will find fulfillment in the gift of Jesus and that his presence here this morning will warm your heart. I pray that you will find joyful friendship in this church family, and that your heart will be blessed as we gather together in the name of Jesus— may you know that he is with us here right now and his Spirit is within .you. Amen

This morning we are starting a new series in 1 Timothy, so to begin, I'm going to introduce a little bit about Timothy the person and then the main idea of 1 Timothy. This letter, 2 Timothy and Titus are commonly referred to as “the Pastoral Epistles” because they are the only letters addressed to individuals responsible for leading the church. Even though 1 Timothy was addressed to Timothy by the Apostle Paul, it was not a private letter. Paul intended for this letter to be shared with the whole .church and circulated to other churches as well

Now, Timothy was a young disciple of the Apostle Paul, and one of Paul's most trusted and faithful coworkers. Even though Paul talks about Timothy's youthfulness, he most likely was not a teenager. In those days a person was considered youth up to their mid-thirties, and it's likely that Timothy, as a church overseer, was in his late 20s or early 30s—we don't really know, but we do know that he was thought of as youthful, and he was also shy. So this letter would have been a significant task for him to carry out, but he had the goods. His father was a Greek of good reputation, and his mother was a Jewish believer with a sincere faith. So, Timothy had a mixed Jewish and Greek background in a home with a strong religious heritage— he was most likely well-versed in the OT and in Greek mythology, which puts Paul's instruction right in his realm. Despite the probable religious and cultural syncretism from having both

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Greek and Jewish parents, Timothy's own Christian faith clearly ruled his belief system, considering how Paul favored him as a Christian coworker. So that is a little bit about the person of Timothy

Now, **the main idea of 1 Tim. is about watching for and defending against false teachers and deception in the church. Paul lays out a remarkable plan in this letter for fighting against deception, which involves the church organization, the responsibilities of leadership, and the standard of church life.** These three things together are quite powerful for helping the church defend itself against deception and, in turn, helping it to become a thriving Christian church. Even though this letter is addressed to Timothy and the church, it is really meant for us individually since we, as individuals make up the church. So we should apply these principles to help defend against the deception that so easily sneaks into our own lives, and, through us, into our church

Now let's read the Scripture for this morning, **(1 Timothy 1:1-11)**
Let's pray...

This is a thick passage, but there are a couple of key concerns brought up by Paul that we'll look at, focusing on false doctrines and sound doctrine. Actually, before that, I want to deal quickly with the myths and genealogies in v. 4. We don't really know what genealogies or myths were creeping up in the early church at this time but there is some thought that it might have been connected to mythical Jewish genealogies that named all of the children of Adam and Eve and beyond.... possibly the book of Jubilees, which is a pseudo Genesis—actually, I don't even want to waste time on this part because it is, as Paul says in v. 6, “meaningless talk.” So let's move on from that, all we need to know is that Paul was instructing Timothy to deal with false doctrines.

So Paul warns Timothy about false doctrines in the church and later in v. 10-11, he talks about sound doctrine. Now, the term doctrine is very technical and you might hear it pop up here and there, but don't be scared away by it. **A doctrine is just a set of beliefs that any group,**

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such as the church, or political party, abides by. Doctrines define church practice so a church's doctrine is incredibly important, and it is crucial that the church follows the right doctrine. In fact, doctrines are not only for groups, they define your own individual approach to life. So as we go through this, I want to challenge you to see how your own belief system, your personal doctrine, aligns or does not align with the teachings of the Apostles, and think about what you might need to do to turn from any false beliefs to real faith-based beliefs founded on the word of God.

Back to doctrines— we won't dive into detailed church doctrines, but **one example of a doctrine that this church holds is: God is a Trinity - God the Father, God the Son - Christ Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17).** This is called the doctrine of the Trinity. You can go to our website to see our full core beliefs in the "About Us" menu heading, in "Our Mission." In fact, I hope you have reviewed our church's core beliefs- not just our church but any church you plan to attend, to make sure that the core beliefs line up with the teachings of the Bible. If you are new to Christianity then some of what is stated might not really make a lot of sense- so I'll tell you the main core beliefs that you should look for, and this would fall under the "sound doctrine" that Paul talks about— really, just look for all the elements of the Apostle's Creed, which is a late 4th century attempt to put all of the essential doctrines of the church into one statement.

(Apostle's Creed - see addendum)- there's God the creator of everything, the Trinity, the virgin birth, Christ crucified, His resurrection and ascension, the second coming, and our forgiveness of sins, and resurrection to eternal life. All of these statements in the Apostle's Creed point to the essential underlying set of beliefs that have defined the true church of Christ since it's beginning, they are rooted in the Gospel of Jesus and the teachings of the Apostles.

When Paul talks about sound doctrine in this passage, he is talking about the apostles' teachings based on the Gospel of Jesus, and

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specifically in the way that he and the other apostles have taught, and nothing more. That is very important because the Mormons have doctrines that look very similar to our gospel but are critically different. Besides changing words in the NT, Mormons have added the writings of Joseph Smith to their doctrine, and this is a very dangerous deception that teaches a false Christ.

So, **a false doctrine is any teaching that is contrary to the exclusive interpretation of the gospel that the Apostle's taught,** and that includes versions of the gospel that do not line up with what we find not just in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but Acts, Romans, all of the letters, Revelation, the entire NT together with the OT. When I say OT, you might think, "wait a second, isn't the gospel just those first 4 books of the NT?" NO! Gospel means good news, and the good news of Jesus Christ is really the entire Christian Bible from start to finish, from Genesis to Revelation— **the sound doctrine of the Gospel is all the teachings of the Old Testament pointing to and finding its fulfillment in Jesus. As well, the sound doctrine of the Gospel is all the teachings in the New Testament, which reveal who Christ is, who we are, and how our relationship with Christ changes us.** There is nothing that forms sound doctrine beyond what we find in the Christian Bible- so there are no other additional writings that we can add to it.

Continuing with false doctrines- **in verse 4, Paul describes the effect of these false teachings. He says, "such things promote controversial speculations..." Any teaching that cannot find a solid, consistent foundation in the Bible is speculative— and teachings that are speculative without a sure biblical foundation are sure to cause controversy in the church, and that is what Paul is telling us to avoid.**

Now, turning to sound doctrine, look at the rest of v. 4, (V.4b). Paul says that sound doctrine advances God's work, which is by faith. I find it very interesting that Paul uses faith here in opposition to speculation. You might think that faith is a form of speculation because faith is based on

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what you cannot see. Actually, **biblical faith is not speculation, true Christian faith always begins with the Word of God— always! Faith is always initiated by God first— faith is grounded in the words that God has spoken to us first, and if we base our faith on anything that God has not spoken to us through His Word, then we are falling into speculation** — do you see the difference? Speculation is anything we try to add to God’s Word that is not actually from God, but faith always has its root in God’s Word, and likewise, sound doctrine is rooted and formed by God’s Word— his entire Word, the OT and NT together, in line with how the Apostle’s taught the gospel, with nothing else added. Finally, sound doctrine has the heart of advancing God’s work. Not the whims of human culture or speculative ideologies, but God’s solid, faith defining work. **Faith has the force of God’s word and work behind it, but speculation has the unstable human imagination behind it.** Now there is one more element that underlines all of this, which is verse 5, and we will come back to that at the end.

Right now, we’ll skip to verses 8-10 really quickly, and here we will see where the OT figures into the gospel and the sound doctrine that Paul is talking about. Here Paul brings up the law— **the law is often used in the NT as a general term for the OT as a whole, but also for Moses’s law, and more specifically for the Ten Commandments, which appears to be what Paul is talking about here.** Now don’t forget, the only Bible the Apostle’s had in the first century was the Old Testament. In the apostles’ interpretation, the OT points to Jesus and ultimately finds its completion through Jesus. Now this does not mean the the OT is no longer valid, even though the gospel has superseded parts of the law and especially the sacrificial system- the law is still valid but it applies to us through Jesus and by the Holy Spirit. So let’s read from Paul’s mouth the law’s place in our world and even our lives today: starting at verse 8:

⁸We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. ⁹We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰for the

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sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine...

If you look closely, this is an expanded list of all ten commandments, and Paul says that this law was made to expose unrighteous practices and whatever is contrary to right doctrine. So **the law is meant to expose the evil and darkness that sits at the center of the human heart and it is meant to point us to Jesus, the remedy to the problem of sin and evil.** Regarding the law's effect in our own lives today, it is not that the law has gone away; rather, the law is being written into our own hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit. **Hebrews 10:15-16 quotes from the OT, Jeremiah 31:33-34, saying, “the Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: “this is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.” Then he adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.”** — what a powerful faith-defining statement for us!

This is how the apostles saw Jesus fulfilling the law: the grace of God and his forgiveness was made possible through the sacrifice of Christ, which saved us and enabled us to be filled with the Holy Spirit, who would then begin writing the law into our hearts and minds. This is sound doctrine and the proper use of the law. **For sinners, the law is meant to pronounce guilt, but for the saved, the law is the pen in the Holy Spirit's hand that rewrites our belief system at the core of our inward being.** Maybe you sense the strokes of the Spirit's pen in your heart right now but you're resisting him— let go, don't be afraid. Let the point of his gracious and gentle pen touch the fabric of your being and impress a new code upon your heart, a new way of life founded on the right doctrine of God's Word that redefines your approach to life. He loves you deeply, he is for you, and he will wipe away forever every wrong you have ever committed. Amen!

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To finish, now let's look back at the key verse for this passage and probably the whole book, verse 5— this sets the mark for our goal in pursuing right doctrine in our own lives and in the church: **“The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”** The context of this is correcting those who are teaching or following false doctrines, but it also has to do with how we live out our beliefs. Let me ask you, how loving is your pursuit of your belief system? Love is what needs to underline our pursuit of sound doctrine in every way, how we teach it, how we confront false teachings, and how we live it out. People who get blindly caught up in doctrine can easily leave a freezing cold impression on people around them. Some like to pull out the doctrine hammer and pound their doctrine— and it may be right doctrine— into the heads of people who don't measure up. I think everyone of us is guilty of uncaringly pushing our belief systems onto others at one time or another, and whether we are right or wrong in the beliefs we stand on, we need to constantly keep love as our goal.

However, Paul speaks about love stemming from three things in this context, and I want to finish with these three things. I think we misunderstand love sometimes. Biblical love is not just a free for all, what I mean is that we cannot just give our love to anything and everything for the sake of love. God does not love sin, God does not love evil practices, He does not love darkness and that which destroys the people he has made— evil and sin destroy people, God loves the sinner but not the practice. 1 Cor. 13 says that love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. God is love but there are limits to his love in that sense— but because of his great love, we have been given a way out of our darkness so that we can indeed experience and step into the all-encompassing love of God.

Now look at the three stems from which love should come— verse 5- the first is love which comes from a pure heart. So this is not a selfish love that seeks to get its own way, or a surface love that is really only interested in pushing one's own beliefs. Love from a pure heart is

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love motivated by the Holy Spirit which desires others to be healed, made whole, and brought into an intimate relationship with Jesus and the truth. **The second is love from a good conscience.** We cannot ignore our own sinful practices while demanding that another turn away from them- that is hypocrisy. Likewise, we cannot just stand around idle while someone around us is walking down a path of destruction or has given themselves over to lies and deception. To do nothing is not love, to support another in their deception is not love, so we need to respond with the truth but spoken from a heart of love. Finally, **the third stem is love from a sincere faith.** There is love that is motivated by the ways of the world, or the currents of society, that comes with beliefs that are contrary to the Bible's sound teachings. We should not just accept every humanistic system of belief or ideology in the name of love because many of these ideologies are contrary to biblical doctrine. No matter how great the latest ideological trend in our culture might sound, we need to be careful to line it up with the whole Word of God or we may end up basing our beliefs on the speculation of human imagination rather than faith in God. Love without sincere faith in God is worldly and it promotes sensuality, and this is not the goal of right doctrine. Rather, **love from a sincere faith is purely motivated out of love for our holy God, and trust in His Word, His ways, and His commands. Faith recognizes that the way to the greatest love of all is through Christ and Christ alone.** So my friends, as we struggle to work out the right doctrine in our church and lives, let us love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith, all to God's glory and for the advancement of his amazing work here on earth, amen! Let's pray.

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Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

[\[1\]](#) Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, “*Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*” (Vol. 2. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), Introduction.