

LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for March 21: A godly character is a key part of evangelism_30804

March 5, 2004

Posted: 3/05/04

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A godly character is a key part of evangelism

1 Timothy 4

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The Apostle Paul repeatedly had reminded Timothy and the Ephesian church of the need to witness to the salvation Christ offered. Paul stressed the best way for Christians to witness was through godly living. Living blameless lives provides the best witness believers can offer.

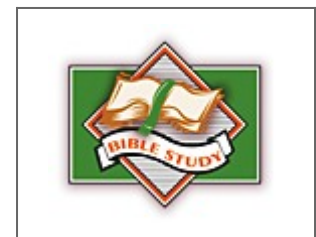
The emergence of false doctrine in the church threatened 1st century churches. The re-emergence of false doctrines threatens churches today. Christians lament the breakdown of our society in which Christianity was once so prominent. Now it seems churches are struggling with movements that challenge the very essence of Christianity. People are searching for

spiritual meaning in life, but they are looking in all the wrong places.

Reject ungodly teachings (vv. 1-5)

Paul reminded Timothy that false teachers were not unexpected. The Holy Spirit had predicted them. Early Christians expected to confront false teachers in the days prior to Christ's second coming. Paul's use of "in later times" expresses the same idea as his use of "last days" (2 Timothy 3:1).

Christians cannot accept false teaching and maintain integrity in the faith. Following "deceiving spirits," the false teachers, meant abandoning their commitment and loyalty to God in Christ. The false teachers appeared pious but actually were Satan's agents in leading believers astray. Paul described them as "liars." The devil had branded them as slaves, reflecting the ancient custom of branding slaves to indicate ownership.



Paul finally detailed the false teachings—no marriage and abstaining from certain foods. These prohibitions likely found their roots in the belief that all fleshly desires were evil. While Paul taught marriage was not always best for Christians, he admitted it was good (1 Corinthians 7:7-9). Rejecting certain foods may have reflected the Jewish teaching that some foods were unclean.

Paul countered that believers knew that God created all food to be enjoyed. Christ did not come to burden us with further laws. He came so we might be made alive in the Spirit. Gratitude to God is the proper response for food set before us..

Pursue godliness (vv. 6-10)

Paul moved from denouncing errors to instructing Timothy on how to respond to them. A church beset with false teachers needed advice from its pastor. “Brethren” suggests closeness of the Christian community. Timothy, God's “servant” (literally, “deacon”) needed daily spiritual nourishment to provide the sound guidance needed.

Appropriate action meant rejecting that which had no Christian foundation. Paul called these false teachings senseless. Timothy needed to replace an attention to “worldly fables” with a focus on obtaining godliness.

Paul was not thinking of exercise and healthy diets when he wrote of bodily discipline in verse 8. He likely was referring to the unacceptable dietary restrictions of the false teachers. Such rigorous abstaining might conceivably provide some earthly benefit, but godliness helps the Christian in both this world and in the future life.

The words, “a trustworthy statement,” refer to verse 8, but verse 10 amplifies and explains that verse. In essence, “trustworthy statement” describes both verses. Christians strive in this world because they have received God's promise of eternal life. Paul described this future eternal life as a hope. Hope is not wishful thinking, but a confident assurance that God will keep his promises.

God wants to redeem all people. Paul labored to share with non-believers the joy and hope he had as a Christian so they might be saved..

Demonstrate godliness (vv. 11-16)

Paul grew increasingly personal as he continued his instructions. He urged Timothy to command and teach the things Paul was sharing with him here and in previous conversations.

Timothy's timidity may have reduced his effectiveness. Paul encouraged him to not let his comparative youthfulness limit him in any way. What he lacked in experience could be overcome by daily exemplifying godly conversation and character. His behavior would demonstrate love for Christ and other Christians, faithfulness to Christ and moral integrity.

Paul commanded Timothy to keep emphasizing the public reading of Scripture. Timothy needed to follow the public reading with exhortation and explanation of the world.

Let me suggest that you consider how much you read the Bible in your class and in worship times. Many classes and churches would do well to read aloud more of God's word in study and worship.

Paul recognized God had endowed Timothy for ministry. Paul charged Timothy to nurture this gift and not be careless about it. Others, noted by the word “presbytery,” had joined Paul in affirming Timothy's gift of special service by the laying on of hands.

Nurturing the gift means cultivating the qualities he used as a pastor. Proper focus included both practicing and reflecting upon his tasks as a pastor. Others would note his progress in these gifts if he gave the gifts their proper attention. Timothy's perseverance would strengthen the church as he expanded his Christian development and provided others the opportunity to hear the gospel and become believers too..

Question for discussion

- ◆ Is a demonstration of godly character still valued in the world today?

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.