

# A Study on 1 Timothy

Week 7 | 3:14-4:5

## Overview | The Household of God

This verse (3:14) begins a new section which is the center point of the letter.

1. Responding to False Teachings (1:1-20)
2. Restoring the Church (2:1-3:13)
- 3. Reminding Timothy (3:14-4:16)**
4. Restoring the Church (5:1-6:2)
5. Responding to False Teaching (6:3-21)

This section is bracketed by Paul reminding Timothy that he hopes to come and visit soon (3:14; 4:13). There is a shift in the focus of the writing where Paul moves from addressing the behavior and beliefs of the teachers and the members of the church to instructing Timothy in how he should conduct himself as he helps lead the change in the church

- You may know how one ought to behave...(3:15)
- If you put these things before the brothers you will be a good servant...(4:6)
- Let no one despise you for your youth...(4:12)
- [You] practice these things, immerse yourself in them...keep a close watch on yourself and the teaching...(4:15-16)

This section, as the center of the entire letter, is a summary of the issues that are plaguing the church in Ephesus. There is a simple structure to follow:

- The main goal of the letter: focus on godly living and the truth (3:14-16)
- The reason for the letter: false teaching and ungodly practice (4:1-5)
- The charge to Timothy: focus on right teaching and godly practice (4:6-16)

## The Main Goal of the Letter | 3:14-16

Paul is concerned that the church understands how one should behave as those who are considered a part of the household of God (v. 15a). Paul makes the connection between being a Christian (who has been redeemed, cleansed, and renewed) and a lifestyle that reflects that reality. This was in direct contrast to the way the church had been taught and modeled by some of the false teachers. "In contrast to how the false teachers have been conducting themselves within God's household with references to anger, friction, argument and malicious talk, Paul is wanting to see godly behavior as the only acceptable conduct (Macleay, p. 143)."

Paul describes the church of the living God as a "pillar and buttress of the truth (v. 15b)." The truth that he refers to is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the only hope that any have in order to be made right with God. It was this very truth that was being distorted and polluted within the church.

One thing that may be confusing is to whether or not the church is the foundation for the truth or if the truth is the foundation of the church.

- Paul says the church is the "pillar and buttress of the truth (v. 15b)."
- In Ephesians 2:19-22 Paul says, "...you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy

temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

- It’s important to understand the intent in using these metaphors. In Ephesians, Paul reminds us that the foundation of the church is Jesus Christ. To build upon any other thing would be foolish. A house built on a shaky foundation will not last.
- To use the metaphor in another way as he does in 1 Timothy is to show the purpose of household of God – to display the glory of Jesus. In that way, the church (which is built on Jesus) exists to prop up and support and display for the world the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Think of the relevance of this metaphor in a city that housed the great temple to Artemis with its many pillars to support the massive roof.)
- These metaphors are not in contradiction but rather show the comprehensive nature of our union with Christ – we are built on him, we live because of him, and we outwardly display the fruit of that union for the world to see.

The display of this truth is the mystery of godliness (the mystery that is now revealed in Jesus). Whereas those in Ephesus would chant “Great is Artemis! (Acts 19:28)” the church could shout, “Great is Jesus!”

- “He was manifested in the flesh” – This is the mystery of the incarnation that Jesus Christ is God and man, one person with two natures.
- “vindicated by the Spirit” – The nature and work of Jesus were proven by his ministry and especially by his resurrection from the dead. It is the Spirit who worked through Jesus in his ministry (Matthew 12:28) and it is by the Spirit that God reveals to us the truth of Jesus and unites us to him.
- “seen by angels” – This most likely refers to the fact that angels were present throughout his earthly ministry both ministering to him and testifying about him (Luke 2:14; Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43; Luke 24:4-7).
- “proclaimed among the nations” – This speaks to the far reaches of the gospel to Jews and gentiles (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; Romans 16:25-26).
- “believed on in the world” – Since Christ has come in flesh, was vindicated as the true messiah, and the truth about him made known, people from throughout the world have believed in him.
- “taken up in glory.” – This refers to the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1) to heaven where he now rules.
- Artemis may have a great temple made out of stone but the church has as its King the one true God, Jesus Christ who came to earth to save sinners and now rules his kingdom from heaven, with the promise of one day coming back to make all things right.

“The passage enlarges and enriches our understanding of the Person and ministry of the Lord Jesus and so prompts our adoration of him as our Savior. But it should also stimulate our concern that he be honored in his church, and by our testimony to him (Cook, p. 67).”

### **The Reason for the Letter | 4:1-6**

Paul switches focus in chapter 4 to the dangers of the false teachers. He mentions the fact that the Spirit has warned the church that these things will take place and, in fact, they are (Matthew 24:10-11; Acts 20:28-30). He begins by describing the problem.

- Some will depart from the faith (as was evidenced in Hymenaeus and Alexander). The word depart means “apostasy” which is a complete abandonment of the truth.
- The source of this apostasy is rooted in the deception of Satan and his demons (4:1).
  - The battle for truth is always, at its root, a spiritual battle (see Gen. 3).

- It is said of these false teachers that their consciences had been seared (4:2).
  - This can mean that they had become hardened to the Spirit of God and thus had become insensitive to the truth of the gospel.
  - It can also mean “branded.” If this is the meaning it would assume that these teachers were aware of their alignment with the devil and were pretending to care for the church while they led into chaos and ungodliness.
  - Either way, these teachers were leading God’s people away from the truth and were in danger of their own soul’s demise.
- The nature of the error they were teaching had to do with ascetic practices - the avoidance of, and abstinence from, things that would bring pleasure as a means of obtaining religious holiness. Abstaining from things can certainly be a form of discipline and godliness but the problem is when we elevate these things to gospel importance and make a new law out of them by which one derives their right standing before God.
  - They forbade marriage – They were directly teaching what was contrary to God’s word. Marriage was established by God (Genesis 2:18-24) and is continually pointed to as a good institution, one that reflects Christ’s love of the church (Ephesians 5:22-33), not to mention one that is vital for the continuation of the human race. (It’s also possible that part of their hypocrisy had to do with the forbidding of marriage while at the same time being promiscuous – see 2 Timothy 3:6.)
  - They required abstaining from certain food – It’s not specifically mentioned what was to be avoided but if it’s similar to other letters that Paul wrote he might be speaking about avoiding meat (Romans 14:20-21; 1 Corinthians 8:13). Whereas Jesus had declared that all things were clean to eat (Mark 7:18-19), the teachers were trying to add a new restriction that went beyond what Scripture taught.
  - The fact that there were restricting certain foods denied the people the opportunity to partake of what God had provided for them in the goodness of the food with thanksgiving and appreciation.
- Paul responds to these errors by rooting the truth in God’s creational intent (much like he did with the role of men and women in chapter 2).
  - “For everything created by God is good” (v. 4)
    - This echoes the refrain in the creation days of Genesis 1.
    - It counters the false teaching of the Gnostics (which most likely influenced the false teachers saying that the body is bad and the spirit is good. It led to ascetic practices much like the church in Ephesus was dealing with. To say that everything created is good is to push against this false teaching.
  - “and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving” (v. 4)
    - If indeed all things, including marriage and food, are created good then in the right context they should be received and enjoyed.
    - The idea of receiving them with thanksgiving points us to the right and proper stance before the Lord as we partake of his provision for us.
    - Each time we eat is a reminder of God’s sustaining us, providing for us, and his kindness to us. The proper response is thankfulness.
  - “for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.” (v. 5)
    - This phrase is a little confusing but most agree that this is in reference to the believer receiving God’s good gift of food through a clear conscience informed by the word of God (see also Romans 14:13-23).
    - “Verse 5’s additional rationale for the use of all foods suggests that all a believer need do to sanctify any food is to make a prayer of thanksgiving to recognize

the one who has provided the gift. In this context the “word of God” probably implies the use of biblical expressions in the saying of grace, as was common in Judaism (Towner, p. 104).”

- “In this context, ‘made holy’ means suitable for use. Marriage and food are made suitable by God’s spoken word (because he spoke them into existence and declared them to be good) and by our prayerful thanksgiving (by which we worship the giver and not the gifts.) The false teachers are leading the Ephesian Christians away from good things. They may be promising the good life, but they lie. They are taking away God’s Word and his good gifts to his people (Duguid, Hamilton, and Sklar, p. 417).”

**So What? |**

### **Resource List**

*Teaching 1 Timothy* by Angus Macleay (Primary Source for class)

*1 Timothy* by Philip Graham Ryken

*Let’s Study 1 Timothy* by W. John Cook

*Word Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles* by William D. Mounce

*1-2 Timothy & Titus* by Philip H. Towner

*Expository Commentary: Ephesians-Philemon* edited by Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., Jay Sklar

*Commentary on 1 Timothy* by John Calvin

*ESV Study Bible*