

## Instructions About False Teachers

### 1 Timothy 6:3-5

#### Introduction

The chapter includes instructions towards masters and slaves (vv.1-2); toward false teachers (vv. 3-5) and money and godliness (vv.6-19). Paul wants Timothy to keep both the ministry and its message pure. Paul returns to the subject of false teachers for the third time (see 1:3-11; 4:1-5). Paul warned Timothy that false teachers embrace a different doctrine; speculate about useless information rather than focus on godly edification. False teachers place fruitless and empty discussion above love and personal ambition above truth. The false teacher abandons sound teaching for false teaching (v.3); the false teacher is proud (v.4) and has an unhealthy preoccupation with controversial questions (v.4); this is evidence of a corrupt mind mind destitute of truth (v.5a). False teachers often use their positions for financial enrichment and equate wealth with godliness (v.5b). Timothy is told to steer clear of these charlatans (*from such withdraw yourself*).

Why worry about what people teach? Shouldn't we be more concerned about unity? Paul refutes the lie that that doctrine doesn't matter. People who reject healthy (true) teaching will embrace unhealthy (not true) teaching.

The false teacher has to be identified and dealt with. Paul's warnings were given years earlier in Acts 20:28-31). Paul warned the elders in Ephesus to "be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the couch of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears."

#### The False Teacher's False Doctrine (v.3)

*1 Timothy 6:3 (NKJV)* *3If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness,*

We can't ignore the first few words; "If anyone teaches otherwise". Anyone is capable of becoming a false teacher. Anyone is capable of leading others astray. Tragically false teachers are common.

What makes a false teacher a false teacher?

The false teacher teaches a different doctrine (*heterodidaskalei*).

In short order Paul identifies three characteristics of false teachers by **the content of their teaching**.

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1. **The false teacher promotes and defends false teaching.**
2. **The false teacher abandons sound instruction from the Lord Jesus.**
3. **The false teacher disagrees with godly teaching.**

Paul uses an interesting word ‘consent’ (proserchomai) which means approach—and carries with it the idea of “attaching oneself to” (Daniel Guthrie; *The Pastoral Epistles* p.110). In this case ‘connect’ or ‘attach’ to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness.”

Paul uses the word *wholesome (hygiano)*—which speaks of health—wholeness regularly translated ‘sound’ (1:10). In one sense this word is a medical term but now applied to ‘words’. The teachings of Jesus should lead to wholesome healthy beliefs and behavior.

The false teacher does not simply teach a false doctrine but disconnects from the words of Jesus and the teachings that promote righteous behavior (here godliness).

What does this mean? The false teacher denies the identity of Jesus and the message of Jesus. The false teacher denies the righteousness revealed in Christ—and is unwilling to separate himself or herself from the world or the flesh. It would appear that one or both of these things are the reason the false teacher does not submit or commit to the wholesome words of Christ—but rather introduces unwholesome doctrine to justify their false teachings or perverse way of life.

You will recall that Paul wrote; “Instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine, and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies” (1:3-4 NRSV). In this verse the word ‘different doctrine’ and ‘teaches otherwise’ (here in verse 3) are the same. Any teaching that denies the essentials of the gospel—different from the Bible is suspect. Paul enlarges the idea of false doctrine to include the specific instructions of Jesus and doctrine that leads to ungodly living.

“Any teaching different from the sound instruction of the gospel of Christ is false teaching. The Greek word for “sound” could be translated “healthy.” Such instruction is life giving. Some commentators believe that at least one of the Gospels (perhaps Luke) may have already been in circulation, allowing believers access to “sound instruction” in written form. In any case, those teachings had been preserved orally and constantly taught to believers” (see *Life Application Bible Commentary; 1 & 2 Timothy & Titus; p.118*).

Paul’s concern is that the false teachers taught something different from Jesus taught and demonstrated. **The false teacher’s error lies in their unwillingness to agree with Jesus or discount Jesus.**

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**False teachers not only break with orthodoxy (right belief) but break with orthopraxy (right behavior).**

Paul does not paint a picture of a person who unintentionally misses the point on a minor matter, but rather a person who gets the most basic and fundamentals wrong. Paul paints a picture of a person who is evil—twisted—corrupt.

C.S. Lewis wrote; “Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God because He said so.”

J.N.D. Anderson wrote; “He said that he was in existence before Abraham and the he was “lord” of the Sabbath; he claimed to forgive sins; he continually identified himself, in his work, his person and his glory, with the one he termed his heavenly Father; he accepted men’s worship; and he said that he was to be the judge of men at the last day, and that their eternal destiny would depend on their attitude to him.”

Who else made the claims that Christ made concerning Himself? No one. Martin Luther said, “Anything that one imagines of God apart from Christ is only useless thinking and vain idolatry.”

“We affirm that Jesus Christ is God incarnate (John 1:14). The virgin-born descendant of David (Rom.1:3), he had a true human nature, was subject to the Law of God (Gal. 4:5), and was like us at all points, except without sin (Heb. 2:7, 7:26-28). The gospel of Jesus Christ: An evangelical celebration).

The false teacher questions and then breaks with the revelation of the Bible concerning Jesus; the gospel, salvation by faith. The false teacher then invents their own narrative to suit themselves. **The false teacher’s opinion becomes equal with Scripture or even exceeds the authority of the Scripture. The false teacher will present a false view of God, and then a false view of Jesus, and then a false view of salvation.**

### **The False Teacher’s Toxic Character (vv.4a-5a)**

*4he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions,*

False teachers often appear confident and knowledgeable. Paul says they are ‘proud’ knowing nothing. Pauls words are neither flattering or compromising. Paul tells Timothy—that Timothy’s teaching should be “love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith” (see 1 Timothy 1:5). **The true teacher—love from a pure heart—a good conscience—sincere faith—the false teacher—proud—puffed up with his or her own self-importance.**

The false teacher is proud—conceited—puffed up. **Their conceit proves they know nothing.** Remember in chapter 1:7 they desperately desired to be teachers of the law—but were without

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understanding. The false teachers teach doctrine contrary to Scripture and Christ and therefore draw conclusions that are not worthy—but unworthy—not of pride but of shame.

Paul's comments prove the false teacher should be ashamed of himself. The false teacher is caught up with controversy, disputes, myths and endless genealogies (1:4); meaningless talk (1:6 NRSV); that promote speculation, endless arguments about ideas that do not come from Scripture but either from demons or the disturbing minds of the false teachers.

The word obsessed is interesting—it translates the word *noseo* (only here in the Greek N.T.). The KJV uses the word 'doting'—present participle—it literally means to be sick—in classical Greek it was used metaphorically to describe mental illness. Thayer (the Greek scholar) says here it means to be taken with such an interest in a thing that it amounts to morbid fascination or a disease (see p.429).

Other scholars say “a morbid craving” or “his disease is intellectual curiosity about trifles”.

The false teacher has an intense (sick) preoccupation with controversy, disputes, arguments over words. Once again the original language uses a compound word *logo-machias* (*again only here in the Greek NT*) which suggests word battles—or what we might call a war over words. The NASB translates this “He has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words”.

This is not scholarship or precision but rather an attempt to justify false doctrine and bad behavior.

**The false teacher loves to split hairs and split churches.** We are passionate about truth. And in all fairness truth can lead to controversy. **When arrogance and anger provide the full for discussion than little good can come from the conversation.**

**The false teacher delights in ambiguity. The false teacher likes to distort what the Bible makes clear. And what does the Bible make clear? The nature of God. The Bible reveals one God in three persons. The Bible affirms itself as inspired and trustworthy.** The Bible affirms the deity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Bible affirms that God became a man in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible affirms that Jesus died on a cross for sins; that death or atonement put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Jesus died on our behalf as an act of love. The Bible affirms that Jesus was buried and that He rose bodily, physically from the dead on the third day after His crucifixion. Jesus is alive right now. He is the ever living Lord of the Universe. The Bible teaches that human beings are sinners by nature and choice. Romans 3:23 is plain and unambiguous—“all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”. Man needs a Savior. Sin separates us from God. Sinful man is justified by faith in Jesus Christ alone. We are “justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24). **There is no other source for salvation.** The believer is able to live to the glory of God. By virtue of the indwelling Christ, our lives are changed forever. We were spiritually dead to

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God. But now we have been made alive in Christ; Jesus is coming again in great power and glory to judge the living and the dead. Every person will have to give an account of his life before God and will face eternity based on what they did with Jesus (see *The Marks of A Cult*; David Breese; pp.82-83).

Jesus warns about majoring on minor issues and minoring on major issues. “Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also” (Matt. 23:24-25).

All of these truths are undeniable and irrevocable. The exact definition of the gospel is given by Paul in I Corinthians; “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. . .He was buried, and . . .He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (I Cor. 15:3-4).

The Bible is clear about the nature of God, the identity and mission of Jesus and the message of the gospel and the need for all men to be saved.

### **What is the false teacher asking you to swallow?**

What happens when people abandon sound doctrine and feed on a regular diet of disputes and arguments? What happens when people preoccupy themselves with empty questions and the meaning of words? All this leads to envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions.

Drama. Turmoil.

*Useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth,*

The false teachers make it a point to elevate intellect over revelation.

The false teacher and the false teaching further the corruption of the mind. The truth is at first compromised, then corrupted, then concealed. The people are ‘deprived’ (destitute) of the truth.

Deprivation. Like a person denied adequate food or water or nutrients a healthy body can quickly deteriorate. What happens when people are starved of truth? They reject light and embrace darkness.

**False teachers deprive people of the truth. Since they can’t tolerate the truth or the gospel they are left with deceit and deceptive practices.**

Paul knows the truth. The evidence of sin in the life of the false teacher is the evidence of the lack of love and the Lord in their life.

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The false teacher loves darkness. A person who is determined to live an immoral life, or self-centered life, or a life of self-indulgence will flee from the gospel, the Bible, the truth. One of the major reasons why people reject Christ and the gospel is that it reveals their sin and commands repentance—turning from sin turning to the Savior. But the Bible says that men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

If spiritual truth and spiritual health are no longer the goals—the goals change. Now the goal becomes personal enrichment, personal advancement or the accumulation of wealth.

The false teacher is willing to use subterfuge, deceit and subversion to accomplish their goals. Paul was no stranger to the many false teachers who led people away from Christ, away from grace, away from truth.

### **The False Teacher’s Perverse Preoccupation With Profit (v.5b)**

*(v.5b) . . . who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.*

Paul’s comments lead us to believe that some of these false teachers were promoting a gospel that included self-enrichment. Could this be the genesis of the prosperity gospel? What does Paul mean; ‘godliness is a means of gain’? Does wealth produce Christ-like character? It could be that these false teachers not only abandon Biblical truth (they do not endure sound doctrine); but rather give people what they want; itching ears—and they are willing to scratch that itch.

**The false teacher isn’t exactly interested in giving you what you need—but rather giving you what you want in your flesh!** The gospel of Jesus Christ is designed to give us what we need—forgiveness of sin—hope—a right relationship with God.

*Titus 3:10-11; “Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, (v11) knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.”*

False teachers divide people and churches. Most false teachers do not want to abandon the happy hunting grounds of a healthy church. They will pretend to honor the Church’s leaders and honor the Bible. But they still find a way to create drama, promote controversy all the while claiming they are exercising the Biblical gift of discernment.

The divisive person creates factions, splits, divisions in the body of Christ. The divisive person is denied membership in the church after he or she has been warned two times.

John Flavel wrote; “By entertaining of strange persons, men sometimes entertain angels unawares: but by entertaining of strange doctrines, many have entertained devils unawares.”

When are Christians most vulnerable to the twisted versions of Christ and Christianity offered by the false teachers? When they are young. Immature. New to the faith. Like babies who are

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willing to put anything into their mouth—young Christians often have no filter and have yet to cultivate the gift of discernment.

Why do we avoid false teachers?

1. False teachers are deceptive.
2. False teachers are dangerous.
3. False teachers are divisive.
4. False teachers give people what they want instead of what they need.
5. False teachers are not innocent.
6. False teachers cannot tolerate the Gospel of Grace for long.

Remember their goal is to change your mind about God, Jesus, salvation by grace and the gospel. When you change your mind about God, Jesus, salvation by grace or the gospel—you are now free to live your lives for them or based on their false views! The false teacher denies salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Since the false teacher denies salvation by grace alone—they often promote a salvation that includes believing them or following them. But the false teacher offers only an uncertain hope. The person trapped in a cult often wonder what else do I have to do to make God happy or assure my salvation? The false teacher will often offer himself or herself as the authority of last resort.

### **Conclusion**

**Since the Bible is the source of truth it makes perfect sense that the false teacher will introduce doubt and disagreement over the revelation of the Bible. The false teacher will offer a substitute. The false teacher will offer secrets not contained in the Bible or available to their followers. If a person offers a false view of God, a false view of Jesus, a false view of salvation and a false view of living (free to live in sin) that person is a false teacher.**