

12. Learning to Deal with False Teachings in the Church

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual sons become qualified for spiritual leadership. We saw that most of the qualifications for spiritual leadership deal with godly character. That focus on the development of godly character is essential if we want to help our children become godly leaders. In addition, godly leaders also need to learn how to teach the Word of God. First, this is important so that they can help other Christians grow. Second, this is important so that they can refute false teachings. Our topic today will show how to deal with false teachings

Titus 1:10-11 says, “For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.” We saw in the previous topic that the word that is translated “insubordinate” speaks of those who reject authority over them. Here, we see that there are two characteristics of people who reject authority. First, they are called idle talkers (this means those who speak senseless things). Second, they are called deceivers (this means those who try to deceive or seduce others). As a result, Paul said that there are many who speak senseless things in order to deceive others. Paul said that such deceptive teachers were especially common among the Jews that lived on the island of Crete. The false teachings of these Jews had influenced many of the new or weak Christians.

We see that the goal of those who reject authority is to subvert (destroy or overthrow) whole households. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is 2 Timothy 2:16-18 where we read, “But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.” Here, we see two of the results of such false teaching. First, false teaching increases ungodliness. Second, we see that false teaching even overthrows (subverts) the faith of some. We see that such false talkers are to be stopped or put to silence. That is to be done with the Word of God.

We also see why such individuals teach the things that they teach. We see that they teach for the sake of dishonest gain. 1 Peter 5:2-3 says, “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” Here, we see that leaders who teach false teachings are usually motivated either by dishonest gain or power over others. This reminds us that there can even be leaders in the church that have developed wrong motives. Paul warned the elders in Ephesus in Acts 20:30, “Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” This is why it is so important that most of the qualifications for spiritual leadership deal with godly character.

Titus 1:12-14 goes on to say, “One of them, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans *are* always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the

truth.” More than five hundred years before Christ was born, a Greek poet named Epimenides who was born on the island of Crete wrote, "Cretans *are* always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." Here, we see that the people of Crete had a bad reputation among the other Greeks. Epimenides described his own people of Crete in three ways. He said that they were always liars. He said that they acted like wild animals (evil beasts). He said that they only thought of their own stomach. Paul said that what Epimenides said about his own people was true.

When people out of such a background become Christians, it is important to help them develop godly character so that they will become mature. Ephesians 4:14 warns, “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” Here, we see that people from such a background need spiritual parents to help them mature and develop godly character. In Crete, as in many other places, Jews who had learned the traditions of the elders tried to get Gentile Christians to follow the Jewish traditions. Christ had warned in Mark 7:6-8, “He answered and said to them, ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: “This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”’ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men--the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.”” Like Paul instructed Titus, we need to understand the backgrounds of others and show them how to become mature godly Christians.

The word that is translated “rebuke” means *to correct a person or to tell him his fault*. Matthew 18:15 says, “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.”” Here, we see that the word is translated “tell his fault”. Here, we see that Matthew tells us how to rebuke a person who may be spreading false teachings. We are first to talk to that person alone to try and help him correct the false teaching that he is spreading. Many times, people who are not growing spiritually are easily deceived as we saw in the previous paragraph. They have been deceived by others and are telling what they heard. Often, if we will go to them individually and show them what the Word of God says, they will accept what the Word of God says and change what they are teaching. In this way, Paul said that they will become sound in the faith.

We also see the dangers of Jewish fables and commandments of men. Fables are stories that people tell and may be either true or false. One problem with such stories is that the people hearing those stories do not know whether those stories are true or false. Commandments of men are rules that people give to Christians that do not come from the Bible. In Mark 7:8-9 Christ said, “‘For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men--the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.’ He said to them, ‘*All too* well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.’”” Here, we see that many people will lay aside the commandment of God and will teach their own rules or traditions. That is why Galatians 5:1 warns, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” The commandments of men become a yoke of bondage.

We see that fables and commandments of men turn people from the truth. Paul warned Timothy

in 2 Timothy 4:3-4, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” Just as Timothy and Titus both had to deal with people being deceived by fables and commandments of men, we also need to equip our children to deal with these same things because such teachings are also very common today.

Titus 1:15-16 goes on to say, “To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.” The word that is translated “pure” means *innocent or free from sin and guilt*. In contrast, the word that is translated “defiled” means *to be defiled with sin*. This word is used in Jude 8 where we read, “Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.” Jude is speaking about false teachers and he describes how such teachers affect others. The Jewish false teachers were causing great confusion to the weak Christians on the island of Crete.

We also see that both the mind and conscience of a person become defiled. In Hebrews 12:15, we read, “Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.” Here, we see that a person with a root of bitterness can even cause many others to become defiled. This is due to the fact that weak Christians may become convinced that they are committing sins when no sin has been committed. Other weak Christians may believe false teachings and feel that some sins are not sin.

False teachers who are defiled and unbelieving may claim to know God. At the same time, they commit sins that deny or show that what they are saying when they claim to know God does not come from the heart. Then, we have three words used to describe the works or actions of such false teachers. First, we see that their works are abominable (their works are so evil that they are like something that has a bad smell). Second, we see that their works are disobedient. This means that it is evident that such false teachers are in disobedience to the Word of God. Third, we see that they are disqualified for every good work. The word that is translated “disqualified” was used to describe metals and coins that did not pass the test because they were not genuine. In Hebrews 6:8, the word is translated “rejected” and says, “But if it bears thorns and briars, *it is* rejected and near to being cursed, whose end *is* to be burned.” False teachers show by their works that they are not true Christians at all. Often, such false teachers do not even recognize that their works are evil.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to protect new and weak Christians from false teachers and their teachings by helping our children learn how to deal with such false teachings in the church. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to deal with false teachings that have been taught by false teachers.