

7. Learning How to Teach Sound Doctrine

In our last two topics, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to become qualified to help the church in its growth and development. We saw that most of the qualifications for spiritual leadership deal with the development of godly character. As Christians develop godly character, others will listen to what they say because they see how the Lord is transforming their lives. In our topic today, we are to see how to help our children learn to teach sound doctrine.

One reason why it is important to teach our children how to teach sound doctrine is due to the fact that God warned that there will be some who will depart from the faith. In 1 Timothy 4:1-3, we read, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.” Several years earlier, Paul had spoken to the elders of the church at Ephesus in Acts 20:29-30 and said, “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” Here, we see that the Spirit has shown this to Paul at an earlier time. Timothy was now to remind the elders since he was in Ephesus.

The phrase “latter times” speaks of the period of time from the time Christ went to heaven after the resurrection until His return. The word translated “some will depart” is explained more fully in Hebrews 3:12 where we read, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.” Here, we see that people who depart from the faith are people who were professing Christians who deceived others for a time but actually still had an evil heart of unbelief. Since such individuals never had a true faith, they leave and go away from what they have heard about the meaning of true faith. Instead, they begin to turn their attention to seducing (deceiving) spirits and doctrines of demons. Such individuals became false teachers in the time of the New Testament and still often become false teachers today.

We also see the teachings of such false teachers. We see that it does not bother such false teachers to speak lies in order to deceive. Hypocrisy was the word that described actors in a play who placed a mask over their face and then spoke like the face that they were wearing. Then they would change to a different mask and speak in a totally different way. The reason it does not bother such false teachers to speak lies is due to the fact that they have seared their conscience with a hot iron. A hot iron burns so completely that it does not even bother the conscience of these false teachers because they want to deceive others with these doctrines of demons.

Two common false teachings throughout the history of the church are false teachers who forbid others to marry as a way to earn their salvation or forbidding people to eat certain foods to earn their salvation. Here, we see that both types of false teaching cause people to think that they can earn their salvation by their own works. In contrast, we want to help our children understand that God is the One who created marriage when He brought Eve to Adam in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 2:22 says, “Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.” God is also the One who created all foods for us to eat. Genesis 9:3 says, “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.” In these verses, we see that both marriage and all foods are given by God for us. As a result, true believers give thanks to God for both marriage and food.

1 Timothy 4:4-5 says, “For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” Here, we see why true Christians can enjoy marriage and enjoy all foods and do not need to be deceived by false teachers. Everything that God created is good. John 1:1-3 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” The Father willed all things and Christ brought all things into existence. Genesis 1:31 says, “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed *it was* very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” As a result, we see that everything that God created is good.

We also see that nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving. The word that is translated “refused” means *to throw something away because it is unclean*. Peter had to learn not to refuse what God provided when God spoke to him in Acts 10:15 and said, “And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’” Instead, we are to take what God provides and thank Him for it. In setting aside the instructions given to Moses about unclean animals to keep Israel a separate nation until Christ came, we see that God has provided all food for us to eat. Jewish Christians are still free to avoid eating those things because Acts 21:20 says, “And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, ‘You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.’” Jewish Christians can be zealous for the law and choose not to eat foods that were temporarily unclean according to the Law of Moses. As Gentile Christians, we are not under the law and are free to eat all foods. Acts 21:25 says, “But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written *and* decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.” We are able to enjoy our freedom in Christ.

1 Timothy 4:6-10 says, “If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this *end* we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is *the* Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.” Timothy was told that he was to explain these things to the Christians in Ephesus so that they could understand them clearly and not be deceived by false teachers. Paul said Timothy would have a very effective ministry for Christ if he would teach these things to the Christians in Ephesus so that they would be spiritually fed with the words of faith and the good doctrine that Timothy had been taught by Paul and which Timothy demonstrated to others by his own example.

At the same time Timothy was teaching sound doctrine and providing an example of godly living, he was also to avoid adding other teachings that had crept into the church in Ephesus. The word that is translated “profane” means *the ideas and thoughts of ungodly men*. Later, in 2 Timothy 2:16, Paul told Timothy, “But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.” Here, we see that the teachings of ungodly men result in people becoming more ungodly. A second kind of false teaching was old wives fables. The word that is translated “fables” is the word from which we get our English word “myths”. In 2 Timothy 4:3-4 Paul warned Timothy, “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.” Many people today would much rather hear things that tickle their ears and make them feel good rather than hear the sound doctrine of the Word of God.

Timothy was told to exercise himself toward godliness. The word that is translated “exercise” talked about *“the physical preparation that people did to prepare for things like the Isthmian Games or the Olympic Games”* and involved a high level of self-discipline. Paul encouraged Timothy here to exercise that same kind of self-discipline in his spiritual growth. We want to encourage our children to do the same. We see that self-discipline for physical exercise does provide some benefits for our lives. However, self-discipline for growing in godliness is beneficial in all areas of our lives. This self-discipline for spiritual growth provides spiritual benefits for the time that we are living on this earth. It also provides eternal benefits that will last forever. As 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” The statement, “This is a faithful saying” points to the fact that godliness is profitable for all things and is an important statement for our lives. We want to make godliness the goal for our own lives and show our children by our example that godliness is profitable for them in their lives.

Since godliness is so important, Paul was willing to work to the point where he was exhausted and even experience false accusations against him to help his spiritual children grow in godliness. Paul did that because he knew that his trust was in the living God. 1 Timothy 6:17 says, “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.” Riches are uncertain but we can place our faith in the living God. All people benefit from the blessings of God in this life but those who have placed their faith in Christ will experience those blessings for all eternity. This is a key lesson that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain. Then they can help people realize that they face a choice. Each person must choose whether he or she wants to enjoy those blessings only for this life or if that person wants to turn to Christ as his or her Savior and enjoy those blessings for all eternity. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to teach and explain sound doctrine.