

THEME: Timothy – Letters to a Young Man

“True or False”

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber

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Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:3-7

3 When I left for Macedonia, I urged you to stay there in Ephesus and stop those whose teaching is contrary to the truth. 4 Don't let them waste their time in endless discussion of myths and spiritual pedigrees. These things only lead to meaningless speculations, which don't help people live a life of faith in God.

5 The purpose of my instruction is that all believers would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith. 6 But some people have missed this whole point. They have turned away from these things and spend their time in meaningless discussions. 7 They want to be known as teachers of the Law of Moses, but they don't know what they are talking about, even though they speak so confidently.

VIDEO Timothy Week 2 Sermon Starter

SLIDE Timothy – True or False (Use Timothy background)

Today we continue on our series of sermons on the letters of Paul to Timothy. Last week we began by looking at the relationship between Paul and Timothy and getting a brief outline of the two letters that Paul wrote. We got a sense of the background of the letters so we could better understand them. Today we are going to focus on this message of 1 Timothy and next week we will focus on the message of 2 Timothy.

I invite you to take out of your bulletin your Message Notes and your Meditation Moments. There is an opportunity for you to write down the things that you would like to remember from today's message and there are two major points that I hope you will take from today's message and I am hoping there is at least one thing you will want to take home and remember during this next week. We pray every week that God will speak to you through the message in some way as you gather here for worship so I invite you to be listening and write down what you feel like God is speaking to you today.

Then we have daily Scripture readings that we encourage you to use and open up your Bible this week. You're going to read about Timothy and then you will have a chance to read sections from first Timothy and second Timothy in this week's readings. I think you will be blessed as you do this and so I encourage you to take some time in the morning or the evening, either by yourself or with someone else and read some of these powerful passages for yourself.

Last week we looked at the background of these two letters and we learned a few things. We learned that some scholars believe that first Timothy was written maybe 20 years after Paul's death. It was most likely a compilation of things Paul had written to Timothy over his lifetime. These were put together in what is now considered first Timothy. Other scholars believe it was written just like it says as a letter from Paul to Timothy all written in one sitting, after Paul was released from a Roman prison and for a fourth missionary journey that we don't read about in the Bible but may have happened and been taken by the apostle Paul. We are not really sure and it doesn't make much difference for us either way because it is Paul's thoughts that are being conveyed to Timothy. We are going to take it for face value that Paul is writing this letter to Timothy.

This letter was written by Paul to Timothy as Timothy was leading the church in Ephesus. It was written to address problems that were going on in the church which had become the most significant church in the second-largest city in the Roman Empire during the first century. We learned last week that Timothy was a young protégé of Paul and Paul had known Timothy since he was nine or 10 years old. Timothy was maybe 25 or 26 years old when he is receiving this letter and as he is leading the church in Ephesus. Paul mentored Timothy from that young age and Timothy had been studying the Scriptures from this very early age. Paul has sent Timothy out to pastor and to lead a church that is in trouble.

SLIDE Paul's Second Missionary Journey (graphic)

If you look on your map that you have in your bulletin or that you see on the video screen you will notice that Ephesus is on the Western adage of the country that we know today as Turkey, and what was known as Asia Minor in the first century. Ephesus was the second-largest city in the Roman Empire and maybe the second-largest city in the world at that time when Paul is writing this letter to Timothy. There was a large Jewish community in Ephesus and out of that community grew a large church. Many Gentiles, or non-Jewish persons, were

added to the church and so it was quite a collection of diverse people gathered as the church in the city.

Paul spent two years and three months forming this church and it became the most prominent church in all of Christianity in the first century. First it was Jerusalem which was the center of Christianity and then Antioch that you see on the right side of your map and then finally Ephesus in Asia Minor and only two or three decades later would Rome become the center of Christianity and the focal point of the early church. Paul has sent Timothy who is his best young associate to take care of the problems in Ephesus.

Before we talk about those problems I thought you might want to see some video footage as you walk in Paul's footsteps today. If you are ever in that part of the world then you can stop and see the ruins in Ephesus. Next year we are going to lead a trip to the Holy Land and I'm hoping that the following year we might take a trip to Turkey and Greece and go on the journeys of Paul. These ruins were uncovered about four decades ago.

VIDEO Ephesus Ruins (no audio)

This is the Temple which was dedicated to Nero and stood at the time at which this letter was sent. You can see the ruins of the library of Celsus, one of the great libraries of the ancient world which was built sometime after Paul had died. Finally, you see the great Roman Theater in Ephesus which is mentioned in the book of Acts in the story of the gospel being spread in this region.

SLIDE True or False?

The big idea that we find in first Timothy is that there were false teachings going on in the church. There were people who had become Christians and they started teaching but they were bringing in from the outside world the pagans influences and philosophies from their early life. They were trying to meld those together with Christianity and they were teaching people about this combination between their old beliefs and their new faith in Christ. In that day people valued and prized doctors of philosophy and so people wanted to be able to teach others these new beliefs.

These were more than just Sunday School teachers. People paid to come and learn from them during the week and you had people in the church you had become these prominent teachers. But when Paul heard what they were teaching he became concerned that they were teaching things that were not in keeping

with the gospel which he had taught the people and which Christ embodied. Paul is going to address the false teaching by helping Timothy encourage them towards true teaching. He is going to lay out in 1 Timothy what that true teaching looks like.

Paul is then going to address false spirituality that he sees coming from the false teaching. Paul is going to encourage Timothy to teach the people what true spirituality looks like. He called this "godliness."

Today we are going to look at these two things: **true and false teaching and true and false spirituality.**

We get a sense of how important this is from the very beginning of this letter because in the first verse of this letter, which we read last week, we hear these words.

SLIDE *1 This letter is from Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, appointed by the command of God our Savior and Christ Jesus, who gives us hope. 2 I am writing to Timothy, my true son in the faith. May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy, and peace.*

Usually when Paul begins a letter this way he then goes on for a whole chapter saying nice things about the people who are in that city. He'll say things like, *"I remember you and give you praise and Thanksgiving every time I think of you. I'm so grateful for you. Your faith is told around the world. You are wonderful and marvelous."*

In 1 Timothy however he doesn't do any of that. He jumps right into the problem which tells you there is an urgency in this letter and that maybe he is a bit annoyed about what is happening in Ephesus. After this introduction he even uses some powerful language.

SLIDE *3 When I left for Macedonia, I urged you to stay there in Ephesus and stop those whose teaching is contrary to the truth.*

Let's remember that whenever we are reading a letter that someone else has written we are not only learning about the person who wrote the letter but we are learning about the place or the person to whom this letter was written. If I wrote a letter to Janet and I said, "Dear Janet, could you really work on being more patient?"

What would you have learned about Janet who you have never met before? You might learn that Janet struggles with patience, or least that I think she struggles with patience.

Here in this letter we discover the very first thing in the first few lines we find an encouragement to Timothy to urge other people to stop teaching doctrine which is contrary to the truth, then what do we know about what is happening in Ephesus because of this? We know that there are teachers there who are teaching things other than what Paul has taught the people in the church in Ephesus.

We then probably wonder what the false teaching might be that people are teaching. Many of these people were good people but they didn't quite have things in the right order or hadn't quite gotten clear in their own minds what this message of Christ was all about. They may have been off just a bit or they may have been speculating and teaching things as fact that they really didn't know much about.

Have you ever began talking with someone about something and you quote someone or something else that you thought was true and then you discover that it's not? Have you ever acted like you thought you knew what you were talking about when you really didn't? Am I the only one in the room who finds himself in this predicament? Some of this may have been what was happening in Ephesus. Paul then gives these words to Timothy.

SLIDE *4 Don't let them waste their time in endless discussion of myths and spiritual pedigrees. These things only lead to meaningless speculations, which don't help people live a life of faith in God.*

It leads us to wonder about "myths" and "spiritual pedigrees which lead to meaningless speculations." We learn in the next line that these teachers purported to be teachers of the Law of Moses which means that the spiritual pedigrees might be referring to genealogy is in the Old Testament and who is related to whom. Presumably, these teachers were taking their genealogies from the Old Testament which were also known as "spiritual pedigrees" and building doctrine on top of these genealogies, which generally were not meant to be the foundation for important religious doctrine. They were building doctrine or dogma or speculating on spiritual things based simply on spiritual pedigree. It

might've sounded interesting and people were willing to pay money for it, but it wasn't necessarily true according to Paul.

When Paul uses the word "myths" is most often referring to pagan beliefs that are rooted in the Greco-Roman gods or the pantheon of gods. These teachers were bringing in those myths from their past faith and they were integrating them into the Christian faith. Cultural ideas were brought into the church and they were melded together with Christ in something that scholars call "syncretism."

SLIDE "Syncretism"

This is the bringing together of two different faith traditions and building a third faith. The people in the church in Ephesus may not have been knowing that this is what they were doing, but Paul wants to make it clear that by doing this they are speculating on things they don't know much about. They are teaching these ideas as fact and Paul says this can be dangerous.

SLIDE *5 The purpose of my instruction is that all believers would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith. 6 But some people have missed this whole point. They have turned away from these things and spend their time in meaningless discussions. 7 They want to be known as teachers of the Law of Moses, but they don't know what they are talking about, even though they speak so confidently.*

Paul is simply encouraging Timothy to tell these teachers to share the gospel in the way that Paul taught it to each of them. Teach that there is a God who created all things and that he sent his son Jesus Christ to be the Savior and Redeemer of all humanity. When you receive this free gift of grace and salvation our response should be to do good works and to help bring about his kingdom. This is what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ and this is the essence of the gospel. Paul tells the people that if they will do the things that they will be on the right path.

The problem is that he believed people were spending a whole lot of time talking about things they don't even know about and things that don't even matter. Paul wanted the people to come back to the essential truth of the gospel.

SLIDE Gnosticism

When scholars look at I Timothy they often see the beginning of what would become Gnosticism. You may have heard this term before because I've used it. This was a challenge in the early church because it was a melding together of popular Greco-Roman thoughts and philosophy with the Christian faith. The word Gnosticism comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, which means "knowledge" or "to know."

We see the idea of Gnosticism beginning to form in I Timothy, and the idea is that there is a God who created the spiritual realm and that God is good and pure and holy. That God created spiritual beings. Some people call them Angels that they were always called this within Gnosticism, but we might think of them as angels.

Somewhere along the way one of those angels said, "Let's create matter." God did not create matter but an Angel did and this Angel did it against God's will. Matter, or the physical reality that we see, was an aberration and was not originally supposed to be in existence in God's universe. That Angel then created human flesh from the dust of the year. The spark of divinity was placed within human beings, but because flesh was an aberration from what God originally intended, there was pain and sickness and suffering and hurt which came from this aberration of flesh.

God, seeing as human beings with a divine spark inside yet stuck in human bodies, sought to deliver us from that. God sent a Redeemer and a Savior to give to us a secret knowledge that would deliver us from these mortal bodies and this flesh that was never meant to be. The idea of Gnosticism is that you could find knowledge which would set you free. In life you will experience less pain if you have the secret knowledge and then finally when you died you would pass into his spiritual realm and you would be set free from this prison that is your physical body.

That sort of sounds like parts of Christianity, that we have a soul inside of us and that a Redeemer was sent to save us. Jesus was this Redeemer who passed on the secrets of the Kingdom of God. The parables begin to sound like that secret knowledge and these two ideas are brought together and by the second century this was a huge challenge within the Christian faith.

It appears as if Paul is addressing the beginning of this kind of thought in his letter as it begins to be fleshed out, pun intended, in the city of Ephesus which was one of the center points of Roman thought and philosophy.

Let me remind you that it was not just in ancient times which people would take popular ideas from the culture and meld them together with the Christian faith. Christians have done this in every generation. In many ways we continue to struggle with that even today.

When we look at this idea of false teaching we need to remember even today that it's important to be careful how we take the ideas from our culture which are popular and how we meld them into the Christian faith. Let me give you a couple of examples.

In the 1800s there was an organization that came into being that still exists in the United States to this day called the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. They believed that the white race was superior to every other race. A power should be held by the white race over and above every other race and they practiced maintaining that structure using violence and fear. They had adopted the cultural understanding of racism and bigotry which was a fundamental value for them and then they brought together with the Christian faith and they made Christianity seem to fit with that. Most of the members went to church every week and they could quote the Bible chapter and verse as ways of justifying the things that they were doing. Instead of judging their cultural values the light of the gospel they forced the gospel to fit into their cultural values.

More recently, in the past 30 to 40 years, there have been Christians who have adopted what we have come to know as the "prosperity gospel." Some people call it the, "name it and claim it gospel." If you flip through your channels on cable or satellite television and go through the religious channels you will find some which are great and some have a whole lot of teachers who teach this kind of the gospel. They basically say, "God wants you to be rich. God wants you to have more and more. God wants you to have a big house. God wants you to have a big car. God wants you to have a big television set so you can see me better and hear the gospel more clearly."

Then we are told that the best way to get that is to send our money to the preacher. "Send your money to me. If you send your money to our ministry then I will pray for you. You plant your seed and God will meet your need, pressed down

and shaken together, running over. God will pour into your life all of these blessings if you will just buy faith and plant your seed in our ministry."

This is an interesting idea because they are quoting Scripture as they talk about being "pressed down, shaken together and blessings running over." Yet somehow they missed the Scriptures where Jesus said, "You cannot serve both God and money." They might talk about them every now and then, but they missed the one where Jesus is talking to the rich young ruler and tells him to, "Sell everything you have and give it to the poor and then come and follow me."

There is this passage that we are going to look at today from first Timothy in chapter 6 where Paul says to Timothy, "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil so be careful."

Some preachers of this prosperity gospel take what the culture says is important like how you determine your worth, by subtracting your liabilities from your assets, and made sure that the Christian gospel fits into that cultural norm. Instead of holding a mirror up to the cultural norm with the gospel we have pushed this cultural desire and drive for more into the box of the gospel.

Another area where we have struggled with this in our culture is with our political ideologies and our understandings of economic theory and even things like immigration. If you happened to be a Democrat, then Jesus of course was a Democrat and he would certainly see the world that way that you see it. He would understand economics and politics in light of that political platform because that is how you see the world so that must be how Jesus sees the world. If you are a Republican then Jesus of course was a Republican as well. If you are a libertarian then Jesus was a libertarian.

We have these ideas that are really important and we even give money to them. We vote according to these ideas. The other day I was behind a car with several bumper stickers and many of them referred to Jesus. One of my favorites was, "Are you as close to Jesus as you are to my bumper sticker?" Then right next to that was another bumper sticker which said, "I'll keep my religion, money and guns. You keep your change."

It was pretty clear by the placement of the bumper stickers that this is what it meant to be a follower of Jesus, holding these particular political views. Sometimes we need to stop and ask, "What part of these ideas that I hold dearly are in keeping with the gospel and which ones aren't?" Instead, we take the

gospel and we try to make it conform to our ideologies. I'm as guilty as this is anyone out because it's a natural tendency and part of what it means to be human, is that we make things about ourselves and not so much about God and what God might want.

I think we know that in this congregation we are a church who is made up of people of all of those groups that I just named. We have libertarians and Republicans and Democrats. We have people who feel strongly about guns on both sides of the issue. We have people who feel strongly about money and how we should use those resources and how we should collect taxes and how we should use them.

The reality is that Jesus was not a member of any one of those political parties. There are parts of each of these political parties in each of these issues that Jesus would've said "yes" to and there are others that he probably would've said, "no, that really is not in keeping with the Kingdom of God."

We have to be careful about how we judge our ideologies and how we hold them up against our fundamental belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and what he taught because Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. I'm making some of you wiggle a bit aren't I? That's good because Jesus did the very same thing, especially with the religious leaders.

The reality is that it can get a little bit complicated. How do we know what is true? I was a Sunday school class many years ago, before I was a pastor, and the teacher was sharing on a particular topic. I remember thinking that what he was talking about didn't seem to be in keeping with the Scriptures that I read and so I finally raised my hand and I said, "I don't remember ever seeing this in the Scriptures or hearing about this in the Bible. Can you tell me where you got these ideas and the thoughts about this topic?"

He was quite a bit older than me so we look at me like I was a dumb kid and I didn't know what I was talking about and he said, "Well, I read it in a book!" More recently I asked someone where they got their information on a particular topic and they said they got it from Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia which all of us put together and anyone can submit something for! Just because something is published in a book or on the Internet does not make it true, even if it is on the New York Times bestseller list.

SLIDE So how do we know what is true?

Christians have a fundamental belief that the Bible has for us true statements about God. We have a core value in this church that we live by which states that the "Bible is the foundation of our faith and life."

SLIDE The Bible is the foundation of our faith and life.

The Bible speaks to us profoundly about faith and life and God's will for us. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, would say that, "Scripture contains everything necessary for salvation."

But the Bible is also not written as a dogmatic treatise. It's not meant to say to us, "Here's all the answers to everything in life layout life for you. You can look at each topic up in the index and find a simple answer to every question."

The Scriptures are 2000 years' worth of reflections of people of faith and how God has revealed God's self in life situations and throughout history. It's about how God has whispered to them and about what God's will was for their lives in light of their historical circumstances. Even when you go to read the Bible, you have to read it with a little bit of help and a little bit of historical knowledge to discover its full impact for transformation. The reality is that we should not read the Bible just for information but for transformation.

SLIDE We read the Bible for transformation.

We are supposed to read the Bible because it changes our hearts and it helps us learn how to love God with all of our heart, soul mind and strength and how to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. This is why we read the Scriptures, not so that we can use it as a weapon towards other people or topics that we happen to feel a certain way about.

I have run into people who say things like, "The Bible says it, so I believed and that settles it." Here's what I know as a pastor for more than 25 years. You can make the Bible say almost anything that you want to say. You can find five verses about almost anything and twist it into saying that God is in favor of racism, or that God is in favor of abusing women or any one of a number of topics that we would all universally agree are incorrect. This is what can happen if you just take and lift this verse out of its context.

John Wesley was very clear that Scripture was meant to be primary and he used to say that, "I am a man of one book." This is why we give the second graders Bibles, because it is the foundation of our faith and life. Wesley however

said there were other tools that we should use to help us understand our faith more fully. Let me remind you of what is called the Wesleyan quadrilateral.

SLIDE Wesleyan Quadrilateral House (graphic)

In this diagram you notice that the Bible or SCRIPTURE is the foundation because it is the most significant tool that we have in knowing what is true. But we need help in making sense of it and so we also have the TRADITION of the church as the sides of the house. What have Christians believed about these texts and how they interpreted them? How have Christians interpreted the Scriptures the past 2000 years? That includes our current church and small groups and groups of Christians.

Inside is the EXPERIENCE of the Holy Spirit. We invite the Holy Spirit to lead us as a church and as individuals. We listen for the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit leading us.

Finally, there is REASON. God gave us a brain and expects us to use it. We bring all of these to bear in trying to discern truth from error. One of the reasons that we need to use all three of these is that there are many topics in today's world that weren't even thought about or mentioned in the Scriptures because they were written 2000 years ago. You can think of many topics like genetic engineering or immigration or any number of topics that are hot button issues today in which there is not easy clarity within the scriptural text.

SLIDE Wesleyan Quadrilateral Square (graphic)

Here is another way to look at how we know God through the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. Whatever way you choose to use the quadrilateral, Wesley was clear and that we must begin with Scripture. He was in alignment with Paul who used these words when he spoke to Timothy in the second letter chapter 3.

SLIDE *16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. 17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.*

This is why we give Bibles to second graders and why we give you Meditation Moments each week, so you have a chance to read and study the Scriptures each week. We give away free Bibles if you need one and we give you these travel Bibles. We encourage you to take Disciple Bible Study and other

classes which help you to know more fully what the Scriptures teach so that you are theologically informed. We hope that you will experience not only transformation but that you will come to know the truth through these words.

A number of years ago there was a counterfeit operation going on which made headlines here in Durango because there were a number of counterfeit \$20 bills showing up at stores and businesses in our community. They were interviewing an FBI agent about how they go about not only catching the criminal but finding the counterfeit bills. There are so many \$20 bills in circulation and the interviewer wanted to know how it is they would be able to discover which ones work through \$20 bills and which ones were counterfeit. You might remember what he said, *"We don't study the counterfeit bills. We spent hundreds of hours studying the actual true \$20 bill and after we have studied it so well, we know where every little ink drop goes and so you can spot the counterfeit a mile away. You study the real thing."*

That's why we invite you to really be informed and to study the Scriptures and to listen for the Holy Spirit. We invite you to learn what Scripture teaches by reading it on your own and by thinking about the tradition of the church and what it has taught. We invite you to think critically and to ask tough questions and to not simply take anything that comes out of the preacher's mouth at face value but be willing to argue with that and wrestle with that yourself. We hope that in doing that you will see the truth because you will become so familiar with it.

SLIDE False Spirituality

This false teaching was also leading to a false spirituality in Ephesus, which is where we want to go for the next part of the sermon. In Gnosticism, since flesh and matter were evil and the spirit realm was good, then many Gnostics taught that you should not feed the fleshly part of your life. If there was something that brought you a lot of pleasure and made you feel really good, then you shouldn't do it because that was just feeding the flesh. You don't want to see the flesh but you want to feed the spirit.

Here are two examples of how that worked. If you were married then you shouldn't have intimate relationships with one another because that is feeding the flesh. Maybe if you are determined to have a child you might have intercourse, but after that you should refrain and turn off the intimacy because that is catering to the flesh. Better yet, don't ever get married in the first place.

A second thing that they said is that if there is something that you really like to eat and it tastes really good, then you shouldn't eat it. If it tastes really good then that is like pandering to the flesh. And so you should eat rice cakes all the time. Eat broccoli and brussel sprouts but don't eat anything really tasty because that is pandering to the flesh and giving into temptation. That's what you hear in I Timothy 4:3 when Paul says this.

SLIDE *3 They will say it is wrong to be married and wrong to eat certain foods. But God created those foods to be eaten with thanks by faithful people who know the truth. 4 Since everything God created is good, we should not reject any of it but receive it with thanks. 5 For we know it is made acceptable by the word of God and prayer.*

Paul is making it clear in this text that things which are a blessing and things which tastes really good, like those caramel apples or fudge from the Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory, are a blessing from God. It's not that they are bad for you and you shouldn't have them, but rather we should be saying, "Thank God that God gave you taste buds to appreciate this! Thank God somebody thought of the desert which tastes as good as caramel apples and peanut butter fudge."

That doesn't mean that you eat five in a row because moderation is a good thing as well, but when we have that one, we should thank God for the blessing of something it tastes good. We are supposed to feel guilty because we should have it because it is feeding our flesh because the flesh is bad.

When it comes to intimacy with our mate, it is not something we should feel guilty about, but instead we say, "Thank God that God created us with the ability to feel and give each other pleasure emotionally and physically. This is a gift from God and not a curse." So we thank God for these things and see them of the blessing.

That was Paul's perspective and he says that this is false teaching, when we are told not to enjoy our food or abstain from sexual relationships. This is a false spirituality and Paul goes on to teach us about true spirituality.

SLIDE *True spirituality is Godliness = "true piety"*

Godliness sounds like an old Victorian term, but I want us to help us see how godliness should be one of the goals of the Christian life and what godliness looks like for Paul. The literal Greek translation for godliness or true spirituality is, "true piety." If we are striving for "true piety" then what would that look like? Let

me give you three examples of the way that Paul teaches this in his letter to Timothy.

If you have your Bible you might open it to I Timothy 2:9-10. Paul is speaking to women about the relationship between godliness and the clothing or jewelry that they wear and the way they wear their hair. This is kind of interesting so let's listen to what Paul says.

SLIDE *9 And I want women to be modest in their appearance. They should wear decent and appropriate clothing and not draw attention to themselves by the way they fix their hair or by wearing gold or pearls or expensive clothes. 10 For women who claim to be devoted to God should make themselves attractive by the good things they do.*

One thing that is clear when I read that passage is that Paul was never married. I think if Paul had been married he would not have written that passage in just that way.

The second thing that I think of is that every cultural situation is different. What's appropriate in one culture and modest or decent may not be appropriate in another culture. However you dress here, if you were going to go on a mission trip to Kenya you would probably dress differently. You probably won't wear the same clothes or the same jewelry. I haven't studied why braids were a problem in first century Ephesus, but they were a problem in that culture. Today I can't think of any reason why I would look at someone with braids and think that was inappropriate. This has a lot to do with the culture and with the situation in which people live.

The big idea is that we should dress modestly, because when we are focused so much on her outward experience then we missed the mark and we find ourselves obsessing about things that lead us away from God. We are supposed to remember that true beauty comes from inside and is expressed by the good works that we do for others. That doesn't mean that you shouldn't try to look handsome or beautiful or that you should wear the ugliest clothes that you can. Remember that all things are meant to be received with gratitude and thanksgiving, but when your primary focus is on impressing other people by your outward appearance then you have already forgotten the truth of the gospel.

But perhaps the more acute problem was that of insensitive women flaunting their dress, jewelry and hairstyles in a way that hurt the feelings of the poor and disturbed the church. The kinds of adornment mentioned (braided hair . . . gold . . . pearls . . . expensive clothes) all belonged to that culture's critical caricature of wealthy women.

While today this manner of dress is not nearly as exclusive as it was in Paul's day, nor indeed restricted to women, its effects can be the same. I am reminded of a visit to a large, upper-middle-class church (it could have been any large city or suburb). When I entered the sanctuary, the first thing that struck me was the glitter of jewelry, the expensive clothing and the fashionable hairstyles. The craning necks as people sized one another up gave the impression that for many the purpose of gathering together that Sunday morning was to display economic status. A newcomer of modest economic means could not help but feel a sense of exclusion.

This idea about what we wear and in particular roller to church is an interesting one. Before I came to Durango if anyone had told me it would be okay to wear jeans or ski pants or bicycle clothing to church, I would've told them they were crazy. I can still remember the young man I invited to church that I met in the community in the Denver area and when he walked in the door he looked around and he turned around and he walked right back out again. When I saw him later he told me that he didn't feel like he could stay because he was wearing jeans and that's all he owned, along with shorts, and everybody else had on a suit or khakis and a sports coat.

This is why we are willing to change the rules and the package might change but the gospel doesn't. We used to have rules about always wearing a robe up on the chancel area and always using the pulpit, but we don't do those things anymore because they turn people away from God instead of towards God. Last year one of our young adults told me I needed to wear my shirt untucked and so now I do that sometimes, even though I feel naked because my shirt is not tucked in.

One weekend I wore my shirt untucked and then I went to the restroom and after I use the restroom I kept my shirt in because it was a reflex. When I walked back into the sanctuary somebody grabbed my shirt and said, "I thought it was supposed to be untucked," and they began to yank on my shirt! So I untucked

my shirt and then they look at it and said it was too wrinkly and I should tuck it back in! The things we go through to try and be cool and reach each generation!

So on the one side there is trying to be appropriate with the culture so you can connect with other people and with people who haven't experienced Christ. And you can go too far in the other direction like if I showed up wearing a shirt that cost \$2000. I'm not sure you can buy a shirt for that much, but if I could and I showed up wearing one, then you would be right to ask, "Why is our pastor wearing a \$2000 shirt?" There is something not quite right about that.

I think the point is to remember that godliness has something to do with how you carry yourself. We are meant to make sure that the most important thing that other people see in us is the quality of our character and not the quality of our clothes.

The next part of this passage is one that has caused much consternation as it relates to women and their role in the church. We read these words from the apostle Paul to Timothy in verses 12-13.

SLIDE *11 Women should learn quietly and submissively. 12 I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly.*

We could do an entire sermon on how to read this passage and how different scholars have viewed what this passage means, but first let's get clear the context and that is that Paul is writing Timothy about worship and teaching because there are problems with the way that is happening in Ephesus.

Most scholars look at this passage as a temporary restraining order issued to curb the activities of a group of women who were teaching the heresy in Ephesus. Thus the relegation of women to the role of learners, who must be quiet and submissive to the imposed authority structure, represents a local rather than a universal rule. Similarly, the prohibition from teaching in verse 12 was a stopgap measure. Paul instructs a group of women who have been deceived by false teachers to learn in by listening. That word "quietly" is actually not literal "silence" but means to be appropriate and not annoying!

Even more important is looking at this text in light of the entirety of scripture and Paul's writings. Paul demonstrates that he is not in favor of

restricting the role of women in the church on the basis of gender when you read texts like Galatians 3:28 and several others just like it:

SLIDE *26 For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on the character of Christ, like putting on new clothes. 28 There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.*

We also need to recognize that throughout the Bible we have women lifted up who teach and preach and lead such as:

- Miriam, a prophet (Exodus 15)
- Deborah, a nation's leader (Judges 4-5)
- Esther, an advocate (Esther)
- Priscilla, a teacher (Acts 18:18-26, Romans 16:3)
- Lydia, Chloe & Nympha, leaders of the church (Acts 16:13-15, 40; 1 Corinthians 1:11; Colossians 4:15)
- Phoebe, a deaconess (Romans 16:1).
- Junia, an apostle (Romans 16:7).
- Philip's daughter's & other women prophets (Acts 21:9, 1 Corinthians 11:5)
- Tryphena & Tryphosa who are ministry partners (Romans 15:12)
- Euodia & Syntyche (Philippians 4:2, 1 Corinthians 16:16).

There are 10 things we could talk about in this letter but let me just mention two more that Paul brings up. I want to end by looking at 1 Timothy 6 where we find a connection between godliness as it relates to the stuff that we own. We need to recognize that first century Ephesus was not so different from 21st-century America. People were caught up in wanting more and more. Sometimes their desire for more became the center of their lives which is why Paul says this in verses 6-10.

SLIDE *6 Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. 7 After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it. 8 So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content.*

9 But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.

Godliness is the solution for this problem of wanting more and not being content. This problem is one that all of us face because we live in a society which constantly tells us that our value comes from the stuff that we possess. Through commercials and advertisements and website promotions constantly begging us to buy the next, coolest thing we are tempted into thinking that we need that next big thing. As kids we can't wait for Christmas and our birthday to come along so we can get that toy or game.

When we become adults we become more sophisticated in how we play these things. We have to have the bigger house and the bigger car and a bigger television set or whatever it might be. Several years ago I met with a man who began coming to our congregation to worship. He talked to me about how many businesses he owned about how much he was accumulating and how wealthy he was becoming because of some good business decisions. He came to me because his family was becoming a very sick environment because he was working night and day to attain the next big thing for his kids and for his wife. Eventually his wife came to me and said she was worn out and she couldn't do it anymore and she was taking the kids and moving back to her parents.

This man still didn't get it. He went home at night to a large house that he had all to himself with nobody else. He finally moved out of town and I'm not sure if he ever got it because he was too focused on the stuff of life. He was indicative of someone who "craving money, had wandered away from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows."

Paul goes on to give Timothy this direction for the people in the church in Ephesus which we would be well to listen to today. You see all of us in this room are rich in the world where two thirds of the population lives on two dollars a day or less.

SLIDE *17 Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. 18 Tell them*

to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. 19 By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life.

Notice that Paul is not telling Timothy he cannot enjoy things or that it is bad if you have things. He is saying that we should make this the focus of our lives. Enjoy the things you have and possess them but don't let them possess you. This stuff is not meant to be the focus of your life but instead is meant for you to do good or yourself and for others.

Money and possessions are a means to an end and they are not the end in and of itself. The end is doing the work of God and loving God and loving your neighbor.

We learned today about false teaching and true teaching. We learned about turning to Scripture and tradition and reason and experience. We learned about false spirituality versus true spirituality. True spirituality is godliness and pursuing God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. True spirituality is about seeking God's heart and caring for others. It's about having our head on straight when it comes to our possessions and it's about carrying ourselves with modesty and an appropriate sense of God's goodness in our lives.

Last week we read what this really looks like as Paul give words to Timothy in I Timothy 4:12.

SLIDE *12 Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.*

Paul gives us a very clear picture here about what true godliness looks like. It means that you set an example for other people in speech and the way you talk; in conduct and the way you live your life; in faith and the way you trusting God; in the way you love other people and in the purity of your heart. This is what godliness looks like.

This last Friday in your Meditation Moments we asked you to insert in that place where it says young whatever people might look down on you because. Do not let anyone look down you because you are unemployed but set an example

for the believers in what you say and the way you live your life, in love and faith and purity.

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are disabled, but set an example for others in speech and conduct and love and faith and purity. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are old, but set an example for others in speech and conduct and love and faith and purity. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are rich. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are poor but set an example for the believers in speech and conduct and the love and faith and purity.

That passage is meant to convict us a little bit as we read it that way. I know it does for me because where I want for you as your pastor is to live my life is an example. I want to be able to say with the apostle Paul, "Follow me as I follow Christ." I don't do it perfectly but I want to try and set an example for the believers in speech and conduct and love and faith and purity.

My dream is that when people look at you and they know that you go to First United Methodist Church in Durango they would say, "I know somebody that goes to that church. They are the real deal. They live out their faith. I listened to how they talk. I have watched how they act. I have seen their trust in God. I have watched as they love other people, and I can tell they have a pure hearts. They are the real deal."

Christ's call for us is to set example for others in speech and conduct and faith and love and purity. Let's pray.

SLIDE Prayer

While your heads are bowed and your eyes are closed I would invite you to pray and ask God to help you to become godly—help you become the man or the woman that God wants you to be. You might simply say,

"Lord please, I want to be godly and your eyes..."

"Help me to be godly in the way that I dress and carry myself..."

"Help me to be godly in my relationship with money and my possessions..."

"Help me to in speech and in conduct, in faith and love and purity to be the person you made me to be."

In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

“True or False”

Theme: Timothy: Letters to a Young Man

Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:3-7

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon:

Meditation Moments

MONDAY, May 27 – Read Romans 15:1-7 – Like any well-trained rabbi, Paul firmly believed that “everything that was written in the past was written to teach us” (verse 4). We use different tools, and view parts of the Bible’s history and context differently than Paul did. But with him (and Timothy—see Romans 16:21), we hold the Bible as not just a “long ago” book, but a living vehicle God uses to speak to our hearts.

- Which Bible passages and principles have most shaped your life? Have you known people who’d answer that question by naming very different parts of the Bible from the ones you’d choose? How does the Bible’s depth and diversity suit it for the Holy Spirit to use in guiding all the members of God’s richly-varied family?
- Paul named specific traits the Bible can nurture in us. “Through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide,” he wrote, “we might have hope.” In what ways does the Bible strengthen your hope (or, in Pastor John Stott’s words, help you look “beyond time to eternity, beyond present sufferings to future glory”)?

TUESDAY, May 28 – Read 1 Timothy 1:12-19 – Paul did not just preach or write about the good news of God’s grace through Jesus. His life history made him an embodiment of God’s transforming love. But, like all wise leaders, he knew he would not always be around in person. He poured his love of the gospel into Timothy, who shared it with others—and now it has reached you.

- Verse 15 used a very strong expression to emphasize that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”. It is a trustworthy saying, one that deserves our full acceptance. In what ways is the trustworthiness of this saying a source of comfort and confidence to you? Are there times when it challenges you in your reaction to other “sinners”?
- Often in his letters, Paul burst into worshipful expressions like the one in verse 17. Yet in view of the fact that some had abandoned the central truth he loved, he urged Timothy to hold onto faith. What events or

issues stretch and test your faith? In what ways does God's word, or support from other believers, help to strengthen your hold on the faith?

WEDNESDAY, May 29 – Read 1 Timothy 6:17-21 – Paul's first letter to Timothy ended by pointing to one of the "great reversals" Jesus' message brings. Some people in Timothy's church had lots of money. Paul didn't want this often short-lived wealth to blind them to God, "who richly provides" for our well-being. They guarded their financial wealth. Paul called Timothy to guard the true wealth of the good news.

- Verse 19 says that generosity, sharing and a wealth of good deeds allow God's people to "take hold of the life that is truly life." Have you ever felt an inner emptiness that drove you to reexamine your idea of what is "truly life"? What moments have you had that let you know that generosity and sharing are key aspects of a life truly worth living?
- Paul's choice of words in verse 20 implied strongly that God, and not just Paul, had entrusted his ministry and message to Timothy's care. In what ways can God use Paul's letters, and the rest of the Scriptures, to entrust that same essential, life-changing message to us? In what ways can you guard what has been entrusted to you?

THURSDAY, May 30 – Read 2 Timothy 2:14-19 – Let's jump to some places in 2 Timothy where Paul wrote to Timothy about the value of reading and applying the Scriptures. As Timothy's spiritual mentor, Paul urged him to "Present yourself to God as ... a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."

- You may have heard the saying that "if you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything." In what ways are you learning and understanding more of the Bible's message? How can an informed, Christ-centered study of Scripture help you discern truth from falsehood among the many religious ideas that clamor for your attention?
- Verse 14 says, "Keep reminding people of these things ..." Paul didn't just call Timothy to know the truth of the Bible for himself; he wanted him to accurately share its teachings with others. How is what you learn in the Bible shaping your life, especially the ways that you interact with others in your family, neighborhood, school or workplace?

FRIDAY, May 31 – Read 2 Timothy 3:10-17 – Timothy did indeed "know all about" Paul's teaching and way of life, with its sufferings and persecutions. Timothy had traveled with Paul a lot (see Acts 16-18). But Paul's loyalty to the faith and the ministry stayed strong, and he wanted Timothy to do the same. Since infancy, Timothy had built his life on the Scriptures (see 2 Timothy 1:5). "Keep it up," Paul said.

- Paul told Timothy that God's message is "able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus," and that it is "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." How is the Bible playing each of these roles in your life? How have you seen it guide and shape others whom you know well?
- Verse 16 used a unique compound Greek word, saying all Scriptures are "God-breathed." It sounds like Genesis 2, where God breathed life into humans. How do you find God's life-giving power in and through the Bible's human words?

SATURDAY, June 1 – Read 2 Timothy 4:1-5 – In this passage, Paul used the worship language of the early church. "I charge you" was generally used to introduce specific, very important instructions. The rest of this chapter shows that Paul did not know if he would ever see Timothy again. The Roman executioner might come for him at any time. With all the seriousness of a last will and testament, he reminded Timothy that "job 1" for him was to, "Preach the word."

- God called Timothy to be a preacher and pastor. As Christ’s followers we’re all given the wonderful chance to live out our life calling in ways shaped by the Bible’s principles. How does Paul’s call in verse 5—“keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry”—speak to you about how God can work through your gifts in your individual life ministry? How can you live with joy and gratitude for the ways God reveals himself to us in the Scriptures?

Family Activity: Create a blessing box of Bible verses. Find a small cardboard box (e.g. a shoebox or photo box) or buy a wooden box for this purpose. Using colored paper, markers, ribbon, magazine cut-outs, family photos and other fun materials, decorate the box to represent your family and your faith journey. Write some favorite Bible verses on colorful strips of paper and place them in the box. (The Psalms include many verses of praise and thanksgiving as well as promises from God.) Once a day, maybe at mealtime, pull a strip from the box and share the passage aloud. Ask older children and youth to find the verse in the Bible. Thank God for the gift of the Bible.