



Main Point: Overcome false teaching with love from a pure heart, good conscience and sincere faith.

Current Event: “Monsters are made.” James Dawes, director of the Program in Human Rights at Macalester College, made this comment after a Syrian rebel was filmed performing disgraceful acts against his enemy. Dawes notes:

We tell ourselves these men must be monsters, people utterly unlike us, people we could never understand. But we don't say this because it is true. We say this because it is comforting to think so. The far more frightening possibility we must face is that such evil is not diabolically inhuman or beyond understanding. It is human—very human.

How can ordinary men commit such horrific acts? The war criminals I have met did not start out by desecrating corpses, torturing villagers or murdering children. They got there slowly. There are some men who are natural monsters, but most monsters are made.¹

How are false teachers made? What small beliefs lead to death-filled teaching?

Do most people think they are false or true teachers? Why do they think so?

Personal Story: Share with the class a time when you fought for what you now know was false. Point out the circumstances and decisions that led you to that wrong decision. Be sure to share general details as opposed to specific details. Note how God changed your perspective and how you now protect your heart from slowly slipping away from truth.

¹ James Dawes, *Why a man eats another man's heart*, www.cnn.com

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Background: Paul charges Timothy to deal with the false teachers (vv. 3–7), briefly corrects their understanding of the law (vv. 8–11), presents himself as an example of the intended effect of the Gospel (vv. 12–17), and restates his basic charge with some specific examples of false teachers (vv. 18–20).

1 Timothy 1:1–2

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, ²To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

ESV Study Bible: Paul reinforces his apostolic authority by stating that his apostleship came **by command of God**. On the basis of this command, he charges Timothy with his task (v. 3) and provides a general charge to Christians (v. 5).

Why did Paul introduce himself this way? What was he trying to convey?

Does Paul sound boastful to you? Why or why not?

How did Paul’s introduction help empower Timothy among the church in Ephesus?

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1 Timothy 1:3–7

³As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. ⁵The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, ⁷desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

ESV Study Bible: At least one of Timothy’s purposes in Ephesus was to deal with false teaching that was troubling the church. Not enough information is given to determine exactly what the false teaching was. The concern here is not so much the *identity* of the false teachers but their *effect*, which was in direct contrast to the goal of apostolic instruction. The results of false teaching were “speculations” (v. 4) and “vain discussion” (v. 6) while the result of true teaching is “love” coming from “a pure heart and a good

conscience and a sincere faith” (v. 5). The focus of false teaching led to “swerving” and wandering (v. 6) while the focus of true teaching was a steadfast “aim” (v. 5). And regarding the law, the advocates of false teaching were “without understanding” (v. 7) while the advocates of true teaching had correct knowledge (vv. 8–11).

What would you consider false teaching? How do we determine if something is false?

What should we discuss as believers? Are there limits to what we can discuss?

How do we discuss our differences in love? How do we put God’s truth first?

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1 Timothy 1:8–11

⁸ Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹ in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

ESV Study Bible: People who are “just” do not need the law to restrain them, but those who are **lawless and disobedient** need such restraint. Paul is not denying that the law has a use in teaching Christians how to live, for he has said it is “good” (v. 8) and in vv. 9–10 he echoes several of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1–17), in their OT order. Exactly how the law applies to the NT believer is a matter of some debate.

Some argue that the Mosaic law has been entirely superseded, and what remains is the “Law of Christ” (see note on 1 Cor. 9:21). Others argue for an abiding authority of certain aspects of the Mosaic code. Paul elsewhere affirms that Christians are no longer under the Mosaic law (see Rom. 7:6; Gal. 2:16; 3:19–26), and that fits well with what he writes here. As in those other passages, these verses indicate that one purpose of the law is to expose sin. In addition, though believers are no longer under the Law of Moses, they are, as noted, under the Law of Christ and are governed by the Spirit (Rom. 7:6). All interpreters agree that the Mosaic laws, rightly understood, still give Christians wisdom about the kind of conduct that pleases or displeases God.

How is the law good for an unbeliever? Is it ever bad for a believer?

How does the law expose sin and the acts of the ungodly?

How could you use the law to help show someone their sin?

Another Perspective:

Bible Knowledge Commentary: Unlike such aimless speculations, the intended result of Paul's instruction to Timothy was **love**, and the purest kind of love at that. It is that love which pours naturally from a cleansed **heart** (cf. 2 Tim. 2:22), untainted **conscience**, and a **sincere** (*anypokritou*, "unhypocritical"; cf. 2 Tim. 1:5) **faith**. Each member of this beautiful trio speaks of a purity and integrity which produces the most exquisite kind of selfless love, seen in its ultimate form in God's love itself. Whereas the false teachers were motivated by worthless curiosity, Paul's instruction was designed to promote the most magnificent of virtues by maintaining the purity of the church's teaching. God's truth always purifies the human spirit, while error putrifies it.²

Class Discussion: Have your class discuss what you believe is the greatest virtue of mankind. Note that many will reply faithfulness, kindness, wisdom, integrity and so on. Remind your class that in Jesus' and Paul's opinion, love is the greatest virtue a believer can possess.

From Warren Wiersbe: Paul used the word conscience(s) twenty-one times in his letters, and six of these references are in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2; 2 Tim. 1:3; Titus 1:15). The word conscience means "to know with." Conscience is the inner judge that accuses us when we have done wrong and approves when we have done right (Rom. 2:14–15). It is possible to sin against the conscience so that it becomes "defiled" (Titus 1:15). Repeated sinning hardens the conscience so that it becomes "seared" like scar tissue (1 Tim. 4:2).³

Class Discussion: Have your class discuss how their inner judge keeps them out of false teaching and shallow obedience to Christ. Ask members to share how their conscience helps them discern good from evil in the gray areas of life.

Holman New Testament Commentary: The purpose of the law is to point out how good and holy the Lord is and how righteous his doctrines are. It points out our inability to live righteously as God demands. The law points out our guilt and sentences us to condemnation (Rom. 3:19–20). But the law also guides us to the gospel as given in the apostolic writings. It shows us our need for the Savior (Gal. 3:24).⁴

Class Discussion: Have the class discuss how understanding our guilt leads us to repentance. Discuss how addiction programs work—you must understand your temptations and desires before you can keep them in check. Discuss what repentance has looked like for your class members in regard to their sinful lifestyles.

² John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 1 Ti 1:5 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985).

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Faithful*, 304–309 (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2008)

⁴ Anders, Max; Larson, Knute, vol. 9, *1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Holman New Testament Commentary; Holman Reference, 3664 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000).



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In Today's Culture: Christians have been recently bombarded by false teaching in the book *Love Wins* which refutes the reality of hell and proudly proclaims all will go to heaven. Here is an excerpt from the book's publisher:

Claiming that some versions of Jesus should be rejected, particularly those used to intimidate and inspire fear or hatred, [Rob] Bell persuasively interprets the Bible as a message of love and redemption... Bell's vision of Christianity is inclusive, as he argues against some traditional ideas—for instance, hell as eternal punishment reserved for non-Christians—in favor of a God whose love and forgiveness is all encompassing.

Class Exercise: Have your class respond to the following recent review of *Love Wins*:

This is a great book for people at odds with the Christian faith because they perceive it to be judging, critical, condescending, or damning. If that is how you perceive God to be—read this book, and challenge your ideas. God truly is Love. We Christians have just been getting it wrong. —May 15, Review by an Amazon.com User

Note the reviewer believes she is a Christian and thinks she is wrong to believe in judgment or a damning God. She also wants to be challenged, since she read this book in the first place. Encourage dialogue and ask how your class would defend the truth of hell for the hope of heaven.

Challenge: Charge your class to stand for God's truth with a pure heart.