

New series - Teaching on the first letter to Timothy.

Bible Reading – 1 Timothy Chapter 1: v.1-7 & Chapter 6: v. 20-21.

Title: A Church in Danger.

Introduction to the series

Today we begin a new series.

I will be teaching and preaching 12 messages on the book of 1 Timothy over the Autumn and winter period.

These messages will give us all a full understanding of this important letter from Paul to Timothy.

Before I teach the 4th message from chapter 3: v. 1-13, I am going to teach a full topical message on the Biblical role of women, both in ministry, marriage and singleness.

The reason for this is that I do not want any of our lovely women at OIC to have any miss-understandings when we come to the leadership teaching on Elders and Deacons in chapter three.

We will also cover this subject in some measure on our retreat as far as it concerns ministry for women.

The first question that I must ask before we embark on this series, is why is it important that we have teaching in 1 Timothy?

I will give you a number of answers.

1. Turn with me to 2 Timothy Chapter 3: v. 16. (N.K.J.)

¹⁶All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

If we are open to the Holy Spirit working in our lives, through God's word, we will grow as individual members, and corporately as a Church fellowship as we go through this letter.

2. 1 Timothy is a neglected book amongst many Churches today. The reason is that you have to deal with the issue of women in ministry. Paul's teaching, and God's teaching on this subject is not popular today, especially in the western world.

Therefore, it is important that we understand what God's word teaches about women in ministry.

3. Many Churches today around the world are inward looking, and they do not have a positive image with non-Christians outside. There is not much positive impact upon local communities in general. Paul is asking Timothy to focus upon holiness and gospel preaching and teaching, that will impact their communities.

1 Timothy is a letter to help us to re-focus on holiness and the gospel in such a way as to impact the lives of other people, where we work and where we live in our communities.

The famous Scottish preacher "Murray McCheyne" said "**My people's greatest need is my holiness**"

Although simple godly, Christ-like living may seem ordinary and mundane, it nevertheless is the vital building block for any Christian in ministry.

This includes music ministry, welcome team, pack down team, lift-prayer, hospitality, and all aspects of the whole ministry of O.I.C. members.

Christian history over 2,000 years teaches us that compromise, false and wrong teaching from the Bible always results in a decline of the real Church of God.

1 Timothy addresses this issue in a strong way.

4. **Paul was concerned about Christian Leadership** and he wanted Timothy to firmly establish correct Biblical leadership in his Church. As Church members, as Council members we will need to be open to consider God's teaching in the area of leadership. I know that God will bless us if we follow through in this area.

1 Timothy Chapter 3 will be very important as it could shape the future leadership of O.I.C.

A Church will always rise or fall according to the quality of the leadership, so we must get this doctrine correct at O.I.C.

Although there are other reasons, these are the most important.
Let us now start to work through our first message.

Read - 1 Timothy 1: v. 1-7 and 6: v. 20-21.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope,
²To Timothy, a true son in the faith:

Grace, mercy, *and* peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

³As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, ⁴nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. ⁵Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, *from* a good conscience, and *from* sincere faith, ⁶from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, ⁷desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

²⁰O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane *and* idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— ²¹by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith.

Grace *be* with you. Amen.

Introduction to the message.

At the beginning and end of this letter, the main issue concerning the church at Ephesus is revealed to us.

False and different teaching has arisen in the church.

Paul warned about the possibility of this happening in **Acts 20: v. 29-30** when he was challenging the Ephesian Elders.

Acts 20: v. 29-30

²⁹For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

Notice that wrong teaching can come both from within a fellowship and outside from other sources. Be very careful what you listen to on the internet, and what teaching you might receive from other sources. If you take a look at both the beginning and the end of many of Paul's letters, you can often identify some of his main concerns.

This is apparent in 1 Timothy, which is why I am covering the beginning and the end of the letter today.

Illustration

In Japan, most people like to move into a new house or a new apartment.

If that is not possible then, a home that has been fully restored to a very good condition.

I am told that this is the main reason for charging key money.

When you are living in a house or apartment, it can deteriorate very slowly without you even noticing it.

Mould can appear behind cupboards, the sun can fade your curtains, and also fade your wall paper or paint.

Windows can also need replacing, in fact lots can happen and you don't really take a lot of notice.

It can be similar in Church life. Over a period of time a healthy church can deteriorate, often without anybody realising what is happening.

Then after a period of time, action is required to bring the church back to where it should be.

The main focus of 1 Timothy is to bring the Church back to what it should be.

It is my prayer and hope that over the next 12 months to two years, O.I.C. will be the Church that God wants it to be. 1 Timothy will help us in this challenge.

This is both exciting and challenging to all of us here today.

In order to cover the Bible text that I read I am going to divide the teaching into three sections.

1. **Beware of False teachers and false teaching** – 1: v.3-4,7, 6:20.

Paul begins his letter by reminding Timothy of his qualifications to teach God's word. He also affirmed that Timothy was a true born again believer.

Paul was an Apostle of Jesus Christ, this qualified him to teach God's word.

Today we do not have Apostles anymore. God's word, through the Bible will cover all the teaching that Christians need, provided that it is correctly taught.

Sadly, some itinerate preachers claim to be modern day Apostles. This is false teaching and must always be challenged.

The first thing that we notice here in the text is that Paul identifies the false teaching.

It is very important when it comes to false teaching, to identify the error. This is not always obvious, unless you really know your Bible well, and have been taught well in the past.

So what was the problem at the Church in Ephesus?

The text tells us that there was wrong doctrine teaching, and a focus upon fables and genealogies.

I made a careful study of the Greek words and the background to this situation and discovered that there were **two aspects of false teaching in this Church.**

Firstly, there was a focus upon teaching material from two Jewish writings.

These were the book of Jubilees and the Biblical Antiquities of Philo.

Basically these books were an attempt by the Pharisees to re-write parts of the Old Testament.

The teaching was a form of legalism that taught that obedience to the Law was the way to obtain Salvation. It ignored the true gospel of grace through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Secondly there was also false teaching which is well documented in history that was called "Gnosticism" This teaching involved having a special knowledge which enabled you to obtain Salvation.

There were different types of Gnostic teaching, but they all involved having a **special knowledge.**

Basically it was a different form of Gospel. Not the true gospel.

You might be surprised to know that even today, similar false teaching exists.

However it comes in a modern form to fit in with 21st century thinking.

Application

It is important at OIC that the leadership identify false teaching, if it happens within our fellowship.

We are a large international Church and lots of people come here for various reasons.

Since coming here I have identified some false teaching and made attempts to correct it.

As we will discover later, it is one of the roles and responsibilities of Elders to identify and deal with false teaching in the Church.

Therefore, it is important for every member of OIC to be on their guard against false teaching and to report the matter to me as soon as possible.

False teaching, or wrong teaching is a real problem today, mainly because people don't understand the Gospel fully and they don't know their Bibles well, by reading and studying the Bible.

So the first thing we notice is that Paul was quick to identify the false teaching.

It is much easier to identify false teaching in cults like the Jehovah's witness and the Church of Jesus Christ and latter day saints.

They have their own books and theology and you can compare it with the Bible and see what is false.

It is not so easy for some to notice false teaching when it appears in evangelical circles.

One of the methods of false teachers today is to quote the Bible out of context and use it as a starting point for their false teaching.

2. **Look where false teaching leads people** - 1:4,6, 6:21.

Paul identifies two things that happen when false teaching arises.

These are **disputes and falling away** or what is often called "**back-sliding**"

Some translations use the term "**wandering from the faith**".

It is very easy when just a very minor point of wrong teaching is introduced to eventually take people in the totally wrong direction.

Eventually these people wander away completely from the faith.

Let me give you an illustration.

Between the ages of 16-18, I used to train on Dartmoor in England.

It is one of the most difficult places to navigate around and sometimes, the weather can be the worst in the U.K. The British Army and marine commandos use it all the time for training purposes.

The only real location markers in this wild country area are granite stone rocks on top of large hills. We call them "Tors"

To navigate "Dartmoor" you need a very good ordinance survey map and a compass.

The map shows everything from the severity of hills to every possible identification point, including marshes, rivers and disused buildings.

To travel on Dartmoor, you need first of all to identify your position on the map and then follow a compass bearing from that point on the map to the place where you need to walk to.

This would involve walking up and down hills, just following your compass bearing and map, and not else.

If you deviated only one degree from your compass bearing as you left from the start, then you would be about 2 K.M. away from your target after only 15 K.M.

To put it into a Japan situation, if you travelled from Osaka to Tokyo and your compass was only 1 degree out, and you travelled the same distance from Osaka to Tokyo, you would end up in the Japan sea somewhere near North Korea or Russia instead of arriving in Tokyo.

So we see how important it is to be accurate.

The danger with the people at Ephesus is that they had already moved from the central point of the gospel and sound teaching and had started to move in the wrong direction.

Paul wanted Timothy to bring the people back to the starting point, where they had taken the wrong path.

The text also tells us that false teaching leads to disputes. (v. 4)

In v. 6 this is also called "**idle talk**", the E.S.V. Bible calls it "**vain discussions**"

In Chapter 6: v. 20 it is called "**idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.**"

Not only was the false teaching leading people astray, but it was also causing conflict and heated arguments and unhelpful discussions in the Church.

Illustration

You can have a car with the engine running, and then press the accelerator pedal, without engaging any gears, you will make a lot of noise, and go nowhere. Unless you are in the drive mode in an automatic car or in the right gear if you have a manual car, you are not going to go anywhere.

However you will make a lot of noise, use a lot of gasoline/petrol and go nowhere.

The Church in Ephesus was making a lot of noise, but they were not going anywhere. The reason for this was false or wrong teaching.

Application

So here at O.I.C. we must challenge false teaching and deal with it strongly.

If we don't then some people are going to wander from the faith and others are going to divide the fellowship, making a lot of noise in the process.

3. **What MUST we do to correct false teaching and protect and guard the pure gospel.** – 1: v. 4-5, 6:20.

After correcting the false teachers, Paul tells Timothy to do two things as a solution to the general problem of false teaching.

Firstly, he tells Timothy to re-focus on the gospel. (Chapter 1: v. 1,2,4)

In Paul's greeting to Timothy, he focuses upon the gospel which brings Salvation and hope.

In v. 2 we are told that the gospel delivers grace, mercy and peace.

Paul says in v.4 that God's work is promoted not by arguments, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

Salvation will not come through a greater obedience to the Law, or a superior knowledge, but only through an ongoing trust and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

(1:7 & 6:20)

Paul knew that Timothy was born again through the gospel message and he knew that his personal growth had come through his own sanctification by the work of the Holy Spirit in his life.

If a Church does not focus upon the gospel message and communicating that message with not yet Christians, then their focus will be on something else.

That secondary focus can often lead to a distraction, diversion, and even false teaching.

We have an enemy called Satan and he is always working to divide and distract churches from the main focus of the gospel message.

Secondly, Paul tells Timothy to re-focus on holiness. (1: v.5)

He describes holiness as a pure heart, coming from a good conscience.

The contrast between false teaching and holiness is that false teaching draws you away from a close relationship with God, and personal Holiness draws you closer to God and makes your Christian life much more enriching.

At the retreat we will focus this year on Christian growth, through sanctification and holiness, therefore I will not say too much on the subject here.

However, what I would like to say is that if you are walking closely with Jesus, you should be able to identify false teaching, even if your Bible knowledge is limited.

I remember nearly 40 years ago, when my I returned to the Lord, and my wife Wendy became a Christian, some people came to our Church invited by the Pastor, and we were both convicted in our heart that the teaching was wrong.

There was a conviction from the Holy Spirit inside us that something was not right.

The Holy Spirit will never go against God's word, the Bible, so if you feel uncomfortable or suspect false or wrong teaching, there you are probably right.

Conclusion & Application

So by way of conclusion and application there are some things to take home today.

1. **As a church we must be quick to identify and deal with any false teaching that may come from within our Church or from outside our Church.**

Your suspicions must be reported immediately to the Pastor, and he can follow up on this matter. If your concerns turn out not to be correct, I will not be upset. Sometimes there are genuine miss-understanding, and other times you might be right.

2. **We must never forget that false teaching is always destructive.**

It will lead people away from God, and cause division and unhealthy situations within a Church. You can never be too firm and hard in dealing with false teaching and false teachers.

3. **The focus of all believers needs to be personal holiness and preaching, teaching, and communication the gospel to anybody that will hear us.**

When the Holy Spirit is active and in control of our lives, He will either lead us to people in order to communicate the gospel, or bring people into our lives who are open to hear the gospel.

So these two things run side by side and are very important for all of us who profess to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ as our own personal saviour.

We must here at O.I.C. make the Gospel our main focus, and concentrate on our own personal holiness and sanctification.

You need to sign up for the retreat to know more on this matter.

May God bless us to as we process this message in our heads and in our hearts.