



## – Seeking God’s Plan

### I Timothy 1:1-20 - Purposeful Instruction

- One popular item in the family of technology now is a personal GPS system...
  - for a few hundred dollars you could buy a device that would tell you exactly where you are, and exactly where you need to go...
  - your location is tracked by a satellite...and you punch in your desired destination and the device will tell you exactly what steps to take...
  
- They have become so popular in Smart Phones etc. that many people don’t even think about them anymore.
- it still is amazing to me--- the last trip we took we were actually going several hundred miles away...
  - I punched in the address...
  - as we started driving, here’s a map
  - there’s our little car going down 26...
  - when we got close to the on ramp, this voice told us where to turn and when...
    - and they even have the technology now where the voice sounds human...
    - if you want to stop for gas or look for a restaurant, all you had to do was punch in the request...
    - it is an amazing piece of equipment...
    - knowing the plan and staying on course is pretty easy when you have a device like that...
  
- wouldn’t it be great if you had one of those for life...
  - you punched in where you are now...you punched in your desired eternal destination...let’s assume for sake of argument that that would be heaven...and then the computer takes over...
    - and tells you step by step what to do...
    - it’s time to wake up now...its time to go to your chair and have your devotions from the Gospel of Mark...
    - here’s your prayer list...
  
  - your teenager is in a surly mood this morning – navigate carefully...[or spank hard, depending on the need of the moment...]
  
- Can you imagine if you had one of those while trying to solve a problem?...
  - beware of the issues of your heart...
  - you are becoming bitter---here’s three steps to correct that...
  - your friend is becoming disheartened---it is time to say something encouraging...
  - here’s the specific solution---you’ve reached your destination...
  
- wouldn’t it be great if there was a GPS system for the church...
  - a way to know exactly what we are supposed to do...

- exactly how to invest our time...
- exactly how to relate to one another...
- exactly how to reach our community and our world...
- there is certainly a sense in which God's Word seeks to function in that way...
- the Psalmist said... **Psalm 119:105 - Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.**
- and it's true that the Bible doesn't come with a computer chip...but it does come with the promise of Holy Spirit of God...who promises to stand ready to help God's people know and do His will...
- it's with that belief in mind that we should launch a resolution of **Seeking God's Plan...**
- but on purpose we don't want to just limit this theme to the subject of long term strategic planning...we also want to think about God's Plan for everyday life right now...

### **- read I Timothy 1:1-20**

- now, admittedly, you did not see the phrase "portable GPS" in this passage, but that theme is very prevalent here...
  - the apostle Paul understands that the church family is like a flock of sheep...that is one of the metaphors that is often used to describe the people of God...we are like sheep...
  - and one of the challenges that comes with being a sheep is that we are easily distracted if we are not careful [would we all agree with that?]....
  - anyone involved in leadership at any level in practically anything understands that challenge of keeping the group focused on the mission...and the reason that is so strongly emphasized here is because that is especially true of the family of God...
- with the time we have remaining, let's work our way through these verses to find **3 principles to help God's people stay on course.**

## **I. Stay the Course by Majoring on the Majors.**

### **A. The writer**

- the apostle Paul...
- we read a bit of his story at the end of this first chapter and we'll talk more about that later on...
  - but Paul was a man who was dramatically converted on the road to Damascus...
  - and he went from being a person who ridiculed Christ and persecuted God's people to being the most effective church planter in the entire New Testament...
  - you can read that part of the story in Acts chapter 9...
  - God then used Him to become a leader in the church...that is why he is referred to in verse 1 as... **1 Timothy 1:1 - Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope,**
  - you can also think about the rest of Paul's life as being comprised of 3 missionary journeys...that too is described in the book of Acts where Paul had some fascinating adventures as he went from city to city telling men and women the good news of Jesus Christ, and then organizing those who became followers of Christ into churches, and teaching them God's plan for their lives...
  - God also used Paul to write a significant portion of the New Testament...and those books are letters either to churches, or to church leaders...

- Paul's life and ministry was all wrapped up in cooperating with Jesus Christ's promise to build His church...
- one such city that Paul had a tremendous impact on was the city of Ephesus...
  - he had stopped there briefly on his second missionary journey and left a very gifted couple named Priscilla and Aquila to plant the church...
  - then he returned on his third missionary journey and actually spent 3 years there pastoring and developing that group of followers of Christ...
  - you can read all about that in Acts chapters 18-19...
  - Obviously the book of Ephesians is written by Paul to the church, or perhaps churches at Ephesus...
  - now, who is Timothy?...

### **B. The recipient.**

- Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to continue to provide pastoral oversight for this fledging but important church...
- Bible students believe that Paul met Timothy on one of his missionary journeys and led him to Christ...that is why he is called...
  - **v. 2 – to Timothy, my true child in the faith.**
- one of Paul's great delights was to disciple people into meaningful ministry positions in the church...
- and the list of such individuals in the NT is very long...where Paul just poured his life into helping others get to the place where they could make a difference in the church, and therefore, make a difference in the world...
- but without a doubt, the relationship that Paul had with Timothy was especially close...
- he was able to tell the people of the church at Philippi...
- **Philippians 2:19-22 - But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one *else* of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child *serv*ing his father.**
- he told the Corinthians **1 Corinthians 4:17 - For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.**
- there's a lot more we could say about this because there is quite a bit of biblical material...but the point is that Timothy was clearly Paul's right hand man...if Paul needed to have an important job done and he couldn't go himself, his person of choice was Timothy...
- now that didn't mean that Timothy didn't have some things he had to work on...but he was very trusted servant of Christ...so much so that just as Paul had left Titus on the isle of Crete to set things in order there, Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to provide the pastoral leadership that they so sorely needed...
- now, let's just push the pause button on what we have on the table thus far and see if we can find some take-aways
  1. - I hope you're hearing what we're saying --the person God used to write this letter had a very, very sordid past...
    - God is in the business of dramatically changing people...that may be part of God's plan for you...do you have your portable GPS turned on?

2. Another observation we can make here is the centrality of the church in the plan and purpose of God...

- some people take the position – I really like Jesus, I just have no interest in the church...
- you didn't get that idea from the Bible...
- if you take the church out of the NT, the NT no longer exists...
- the gospels tell the story of what Jesus Christ taught and did which became the foundation of the church which He promised to build...
- the book of Acts is the story of how Christ began to fulfill that promise...
- and I would encourage you to read it – NT missions are all about the establishment and development of local churches...
- the epistles are letters to churches or church leaders...
- all that leaves is the book of Revelation...but please keep in mind, all of the predictions about the future are written to seven literal churches...
- it is not an exaggeration to say that God is mediating His plan and program in and through the local church in this day and age...

### C. The challenge.

#### 1. The existence of false teachers within the body.

- if you're familiar with the book of Acts, you may remember that in Acts 20, Paul brought had brought the Ephesian elders together...and he said... **Acts 20:29-30**  
**- I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.**
- that's what's happening by time the book of I Timothy was written, in the early 60's AD, by the way...
- and Paul described these men in clear terms [and keep in mind, this would have been read in church – Paul would not have described himself the way he did in verse 1 if that were not the case...]

#### a. taught strange doctrines – v. 3

- **heterodidaskalein**
- **didaskalein – to teach --- heteros – of a different kind**
  - in other words, these men were teaching things as truth that could not be found anywhere else in the Word of God...they were teaching strange doctrines...

#### b. myths and endless genealogies – v. 4

- Paul doesn't go into exactly what the ideas were, but he does say later in the book that they were...**v. 4:1 – doctrines of demons...**

#### c. give rise to mere speculation – v. 4

- in other words, what they are teaching produces endless questions and arguments in the church because there is no way to determine who is really right because they are not starting with the objective standard of the Word of God...

#### d. rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith – v. 4

- in other words, their teaching is running contrary to God's plan for the church...
- that's the ministry assignment Timothy has been given---pastor a church like that...
- the real crux of the issue becomes clear in the next verses...

#### e. want to be teachers of the law.

- these were men and women in the early church who were known as the Judaizers...they insisted that in order to be saved, you had to keep their version of the OT law, with all of the attendant rules that they had added to the heap...we're talking about legalism...which is the polar opposite of what is described in verse 11...**v. 11 – the glorious gospel of the blessed God.**
- so part of the challenge was....there were all of these people in the church majoring on the minors...who had come up with all these man made rules and laws and were trying to impose them on everyone else as a test of salvation or spirituality...
- and that was contrary to God's plan...of the church being a place that emphasized a relationship with Christ based on grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone...
- but the other aspect of the challenge was...

## **2. The desire of Timothy to desert his post.**

- as we said earlier, Timothy was a good man...but he also sometimes struggled with fear, and struggled with timidity, and struggled with the desire to quit...
- Paul says in verse 3... **1 Timothy 1:3 - As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,**
- the word **urged** is the Greek word – **parakaleo** – “to beg, beseech, entreat, implore”
- Paul says, don't leave...don't get discouraged...don't desert your post...
- the health and future success of the church of Ephesus is dependent on people who will provide a focus that majors on the majors...that's...

## **D. The core issue.**

- please notice carefully what is said in verse 6...
- **1 Timothy 1:6 - For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion,**
- that was the problem...
  - **straying – “miss the mark”**
  - **turned aside – “to go off course”**
    - the church body was in danger of being distracted...wasting its time on issues that really don't matter...
    - Paul says – sure it's frustrating...but I urge you not to desert your post...because the church has to see and seize God's plan of majoring on the majors...of learning to follow the instruction given by God, and God alone...
- and did you see the result in verse 5?...

## **E. The result of majoring on the majors – v. 5**

### **1. love from a pure heart**

### **2. good conscience**

### **3. sincere faith**

- reducing Christianity to adherence to a bunch of rules produces self-righteousness which results in endless arguments in the body...
- whereas the real purpose of the law was to show us our need of a Savior...and when men and women are willing to humble themselves before God...and admit...the law isn't something to impose on others, the law is something to reveal my guilt...and so I come to God with empty hands, in repentance and faith...and then I want to stay on the course of following His Word, and His Word alone, and I would never think of adding anything to that...
- only His Word can give me a pure heart, and a good conscience, and sincere faith...

- now do you think it is possible for the people of God to get off course by majoring on the minors?
- be thinking about some ways that sometimes happens but let's add one more line of argumentation first...this is where Paul's testimony in verses 12-16 fits in...

## II. Stay the Course by Being Humbled by God's Grace.

- Paul's flow of thought is...my story is a perfect illustration of the point...

### A. Paul's past – vv. 13

1. a blasphemer
2. a persecutor
3. a violent aggressor
4. ...sinners, among whom I am foremost of all – v. 15

- he's saying, why would you be arguing about all these man made rules?...
- that's so off-course...the focus ought to be on...

### B. God's response

1. I was shown mercy – v. 13
2. the grace of our Lord was more than abundant – v. 14
3. faith and love are found in Jesus Christ – v. 14

- every time one of these false teachers would begin another one of these legalistic arguments, it took attention off of the **v. 11 – the glorious gospel of the blessed Lord.**

- that was directly contrary to...

### C. God's purpose.

- 1 Timothy 1:16 - **Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.**

- when people outside the church listen to us...they ought to hear people who humbly are amazed at the incredible amount of patience God has shown to us...

- now, what are some of things that God's people can wrongly major on today, or argue about today?...the list is pretty long, isn't it?

1. Educational options
2. Worship style
3. Preferences about dress.
4. Ideas about appropriate entertainment
5. Parenting style
- 6.. Dating process
7. Type and size of car, house, etc.

- the problem with all of this is that legalism takes us away from the purity of the gospel and the beauty of obedience to the revealed Scriptures...

- legalism generally focuses on the sin of someone else...
- and it produces a kind of false pride that is satisfied with keeping a few behaviors in check instead of giving careful attention to the heart
  - [cf. v 5 -- pure heart, and good conscience, and sincere faith God offers...]
- Can I ask you – are you majoring on the majors?...are you letting the instruction that you receive accomplish its God-given purpose [v. 5]...

### **III. Stay the Course by Responding With Worship and Conviction.**

#### **A. Worship – v. 17**

- the great doxology in verse 17
- **1 Timothy 1:17 - Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.**

#### **B. Conviction – v. 18-20**

- if you really believe in the majors, some times you have to take a strong stand for them...