

Intro:

In 1 Timothy 4:1-5, Paul turns his attention to false teachers who are plaguing the church with a kind of veiled legalism that forbade marriage and certain foods. Paul counters this heresy by reminding the church that because of redemption in Christ, we are free to enjoy all that God has created as we wisely discern God's intentions for created things.

Questions:

1. In v1 Paul says that in later times (which refers to the time after Christ's ascension until the present time), people will depart from the faith. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-9 where Paul elaborates on ways people will fall away from the faith in this age.

–Consider the descriptions of people in 2 Timothy 3:1-9. Discuss ways in which we unfortunately see this in our culture today.

–How does meaningful connection and membership in a healthy, grounded local church protect people from being vulnerable to departing the faith?

2. These false teachers were forbidding marriage and certain foods. This likely arose from a dualistic greek view which pitted physical things against spiritual things. This resulted in a distorted view of things God has blessed, like marriage and food. Ultimately, it seems these false teachers were polluting the gospel by implying that the path to true holiness was to forsake these things. In other words, it was a kind of “Jesus plus _____ will make you truly holy” type of theology

–While we may not see celibacy and abstaining from certain foods as a measure of a higher spirituality, what are ways we in our Christian culture sometimes adds things to the gospel as a measure of higher spirituality?

3. Paul counters this false teaching by reminding the church that God has created everything good, and has given all things to his people so that they might enjoy it. However, this does not mean that Christians can do whatever they want. While the gospel frees us, it frees us to enjoy creation, not worship or abuse it.

–Take some time in your group to read Romans 14. What principles does Paul lay down in this chapter that further inform a Christians freedom to enjoy certain foods or drink?

–On one extreme, legalism says “You can’t eat this or do that in order to be holy” while on the other hand licentiousness says, “You can do whatever you want.” How do each of these ways of thinking miss the gospel’s call on the life of a Christian?