

## Introduction

I am excited to start a new series today out of the book of 1 Timothy. I love the Word of God and I have many favorite books of the Bible. Paul's letter to Timothy is definitely in my favorite list. Before we get into the text for today, let me give you the overall theme of the book of Timothy. It is found in 1 Timothy 3:15. Paul writes so that people will know how to conduct themselves in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

(1 Timothy 3:15) "but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth."

God wants His people to know how to conduct themselves in church. He wants the church to know that they are the pillar and support of the truth. The church must uphold truth. Truth is essential to conduct in the church. In my outline of this series, I have identified six characteristics that make for a healthy church. I have entitled the series as Six Characteristics of Healthy Churches. Here are the messages in this series out of 1 Timothy.

September 9, 2012 Healthy Church # 1: Sound Doctrine  
September 16, 2012 Healthy Church # 2: Prayer (1 Tim 2)  
September 23, 2012 Healthy Church # 3: Order Part 1 (Elders, 1 Tim 3:1-7)  
September 30, 2012 Healthy Church # 3: Order Part 2 Service (Deacons, 1 Tim 3:8-12)  
October 7, 2012 John Dean ministering  
October 14, 2012 Healthy Church # 4: Godliness  
October 21, 2012 Healthy Church # 5: Honor (1 Tim 5-6)

The Apostle Paul writes this letter to Timothy, not just as a leader at the church in Ephesus, but he writes to Timothy as his true child in the faith.

(1 Timothy 1:1-2) "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope; {2} to Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."

Luke tells us in Acts 16 that Timothy had a Greek father and a Jewess mother. He lived in Lystra, a small, backward town of Lycaonia, in central Asia Minor. Lystra was established as a Roman colony by Augustus, about 6 B.C. They were a pagan culture, and were steeped into Greek mythology. They believed that Hermes and Zeus had visited their city. Lystra is no longer a city, but an excavation site, and a temple of Zeus has been found.

(Acts 16:1-5) "He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers."

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In Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas were ministering in Lystra and Paul healed a man who had been lame since birth. The people began to call Paul, Hermes, and Barnabas, Zeus. Paul and Barnabas responded by tearing their robes and rebuking the crowds. They informed the people that they were of the same nature as them, and they preached the gospel to them.

(Acts 14:8-18) "And at Lystra there was sitting a certain man, without strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked. {9} This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze upon him, and had seen that he had faith to be made well, {10} said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he leaped up and began to walk. {11} And when the multitudes saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have become like men and have come down to us." {12} And they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. {13} And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. {14} But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out {15} and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you in order that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM. {16} "And in the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; {17} and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." {18} And even saying these things, they with difficulty restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them."

We also find in Acts 16 that Timothy is a disciple and his mother is a believer. There is a possibility that Timothy and his mother received Christ when Paul and Barnabas visited Lystra in Acts 14 and preached the gospel. A church was started, and the brethren in Lystra spoke highly of young Timothy. Paul saw great potential in Timothy and invited him to join Barnabas and him in their missionary journey. Paul circumcised Timothy so that he would be able to minister to Jewish believers. In Jewish culture, it is the father's responsibility to circumcise his son or have his son circumcised. Paul is taking on the father role in Timothy's life.

Paul's role as a father in Timothy's life is verified by the way that Paul addressed Timothy in the new testament. In Paul's first letter to Timothy, he says, "to Timothy my true son in the faith." This gives us the impression that Paul was his spiritual father, having introduced him to Christ, and then raising him up in the ways of the Lord.

(1 Timothy 1:1-2) "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, {2} To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."

In Philippians 2, Paul writes that he wants to send Timothy to them, and that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father, Timothy has served Paul in the work of the gospel. In those days, a son would carry on the family business. If a father was a fisherman, his sons would become fishermen. The son would serve and be an apprentice under his father. Timothy served Paul in his missionary journeys to preach the gospel.

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(Philippians 2:19-22) "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel."

In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul tells the church in Corinth that he is sending Timothy, his son whom he loves, and who is faithful in the Lord. Again, Paul identifies Timothy as his beloved son. The two words used in the Greek are *agapetos teknon*. *Agapetos* comes from *agape* and means one that is loved, or beloved. *Teknon* means a child (son or daughter) that has been produced. The root word is *tikto*, which means to produce, bear, or to bring forth. The combination of these two words suggests that Timothy is Paul's seed or father in the faith, and that he loves him as a son.

Strong's G5088. *tikto*; a strengthened form of a prim. *teko*, *tek'-o* (which is used only as alt. in certain tenses); to produce (from seed, as a mother, a plant, the earth, etc.), lit. or fig.:--bear, be born, bring forth, be delivered, be in travail.

(1 Corinthians 4:17) "For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church."

Timothy is not just a spiritual son; he is also a man that Paul has trained up in ministry. Although many Bible scholars say that Timothy was the pastor at Ephesus, the Scriptures do not specifically say that. Timothy was an apostle and did apostolic ministry with Paul. We find in 1 Thessalonians that Paul, Sylvanus and Timothy wrote to the Thessalonians. Verse two reads, "We give thanks..." The we is Paul, Sylvanus, and Timothy. As we go through the first chapter, all the references to "we" or "our" refer to all three of them.

(1 Thessalonians 1:1-2) "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. {2} We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;"

In verse five Paul says, "our gospel did not come to you in word only." Our refers to Paul, Sylvanus, and Timothy. Verse six says, "You also became imitators of us." The word us again refers to the three of them.

(1 Thessalonians 1:5-6) "for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. {6} You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,"

Then, in chapter 2, we find, "our coming to you was not in vain, but after we had already suffered..." The "our" and the "we" refers to Paul, Sylvanus, and Timothy.

(1 Thessalonians 2:1-3) "For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, {2} but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. {3} For

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our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit;"

Verse four continues, "just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak." The we refers to all three men. Verse five continues, "for we never came with flattering speech..." The we is still referring to all three men. Then, verse six reads, "nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ, we might have asserted our authority." The we again refers to all three men. Paul, Sylvanus, and Timothy were all apostles.

(1 Thessalonians 2:4-6) "but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts. {5} For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed-- God is witness-- {6} nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority."

There are two classifications of apostles. There are apostles of the Lamb and there are the other apostles. The apostles of the Lamb were the twelve identified in Acts 1. Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem until they were filled with the Holy Spirit. The eleven remaining apostles were there waiting and praying.

(Acts 1:13) "And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James."

They drew lots to replace Judas. The requirement to be selected was that the man must have accompanied them with Jesus, beginning with the baptism of John and ending with the death and resurrection of Jesus. Many Bible scholars say that there are no apostles today because nobody today can meet these qualifications. I would say that there were no more apostles of the Lamb. Paul, and many others, are identified as apostles, and they did not travel with Jesus. They did not meet these requirements. These requirements were just for the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The lot fell to Matthias, and he was named among the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

(Acts 1:21-26) ""It is therefore necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us-- {22} beginning with the baptism of John, until the day that He was taken up from us-- one of these should become a witness with us of His resurrection." {23} And they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. {24} And they prayed, and said, "Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two Thou hast chosen {25} to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." {26} And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

I use the term apostles of the Lamb because that is the term used in Revelation. When John writes about the heavenly Jerusalem, he says "the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

(Revelation 21:14) "And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

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There are many other apostles, other than the twelve apostles of the Lamb, that are mentioned in the New Testament. The qualifications for the other apostles was different than the apostles of the Lamb. The word apostle literally means a “sent one.” Apostles in Scripture were spiritual fathers. They raised up spiritual sons. They planted churches, laid foundations, gave oversight to churches, raised up and set in elders in churches, encouraged leaders, strengthened churches, and resolved doctrinal issues.

(Ephesians 2:20) "having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,"

The Apostle Paul is writing to the Timothy who is an apostle being mentored by Paul, and was currently living in Ephesus. This is significant because of the things that Paul is asking Timothy to do in the letter. He charges Timothy with correcting the doctrine being taught.

Paul gives Timothy a standard greeting for that day and time. He says, “grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” Today, people say, “Hi, how are you?” but they do not bless people with a greeting of grace, mercy, and peace. Some people say, “Good luck!”, but rarely do we greet people with grace, mercy, and peace. I want God’s grace in all that I do. I want His mercy in my life, because I mess up and need His mercy. How many of you would rather have His mercy than His judgment? All of us need mercy, because everyone of us make mistakes in our lives. I also need God’s peace in my life. A life of chaos, disorder, and strife is not something that I would want for anyone. We want a life of peace.

(1 Timothy 1:2) "to Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."

Let’s take a look at our text today.

(1 Timothy 1:3-11) "As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach **strange doctrines**, {4} nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith. {5} But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. {6} For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, {7} wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions. {8} But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, {9} realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers {10} and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and **whatever else is contrary to sound teaching**, {11} according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted."

In this passage Paul tells Timothy to remain in Ephesus in order that he can instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines. He makes a distinction between sound teaching and strange doctrine. Doctrine is just a fancy word for teaching. The Greek root word is didasko, which means to teach.

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Strong's G1321. didasko, did-as'-ko; a prol. (caus.) form of a prim. verb dao (to learn); to teach (in the same broad application):--teach.

Timothy's charge from Paul is make sure that strange doctrines are not being taught, and that sound doctrine is being taught. In chapter four, Paul continues his instructions about sound doctrine. He tells Timothy that if he shares these things, all the things that Paul has been sharing in this letter, that he will be a good servant of Christ, and will be nourished on the words of the faith of the sound doctrine. Sound doctrine nourishes the body. It feeds and gives nutrients to the body. Just as healthy food gives nutrition to the body, sound doctrine gives nutrition to us and makes us healthy. Sound doctrine is one of the six areas that Paul talks to Timothy about that will make a church healthy.

(1 Timothy 4:6) "In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following."

Paul also tells Timothy to pay close attention to himself and to his teaching. He says that by doing this, he will insure salvation for himself, and for those who hear him. Sound doctrine keeps us from going astray in our faith. Sometimes it takes perseverance to make sure that we are teaching proper doctrine and that proper doctrine is being taught in the church.

(1 Timothy 4:16) "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."

Paul tells Timothy that these men who are teaching false doctrine have some wrong motives. He makes a comparison to their motives versus the motives that he and Timothy have. First, Paul says that the goal of his instruction is love from a pure heart, good conscience, and a sincere faith. When we are finished looking at the book of 1 Timothy, we are going to spend a few weeks looking at this verse. We will look love from a pure heart. We will look at what it means to have a pure heart and how we keep a pure heart. We will look at love from a good conscience. Paul has a lot to say about our consciences, and we will look at how to have and maintain a good conscience. We will also look at what it means to have a sincere faith. The series on "The Goal is Love" will follow our study of 1 Timothy.

Paul is contrasting his motive and Timothy's motive with the motives of these teachers who are teaching strange doctrines. He says that these men have strayed from having the goal of their instruction being love. They wanted to be teachers. They wanted to be leading people and being in front of people. The problem was that they did not understand what they were saying or the matters that they were making confident assertions. People can raise their voice and preach with boldness, but that does not mean that what they are preaching is correct.

(1 Timothy 1:6-7) "For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, {7} wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions."

What was the content of what these men were teaching? First of all, they were teaching about myths, and genealogies. The teachings caused people to speculate about things, rather than help people grow in their faith.

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(1 Timothy 1:4) "nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith."

Next, these men were teaching people about following the law. These teachers were trying to get people in the church to practice the Law. They wanted people to get circumcised. They wanted people to observe certain days. They wanted people to abstain from certain foods. Paul addresses some of these things again in chapter four.

(1 Timothy 4:1-4) "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, {2} by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, {3} men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. {4} For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude;"

Paul goes on to say that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully. The Law was not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious. It is given for those who are lawless and rebellious. It is given for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane. It is given for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, and immoral men and homosexuals. It is given for kidnappers, liars, and perjurers. All of these sins are contrary to sound teaching. Sound teaching helps people live godly lives.

(1 Timothy 1:8-11) "But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, {9} realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers {10} and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, {11} according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted."

Paul writes the book of Romans to address many of the concerns about the Law. He says that the Law closes the mouths of people and makes everyone accountable to God. It does not justify. Instead, the law gives knowledge of sin. Our righteousness comes by faith in Christ Jesus. Paul also addresses the Law in his letter to the Galatians. These Judaizers who were trying to bring people back under the Law were very prevalent at that time, and they are also prevalent in 2012.

(Romans 3:19-22) "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; {20} because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. {21} But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, {22} even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;"

We have had people come to our body telling us that we are in sin because we are worshipping on Sunday. They tell us that we are in sin for not observing the feasts of Israel. This teaching has been hitting churches across Albuquerque. It is divisive and has caused splits in churches. We have not allowed this strange teaching at EMV and it has not been a problem. But, false teaching brings division in churches. Paul writes to Titus, another young apostle that Paul mentored, that there are

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many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families. There is bad fruit in false teaching.

(Titus 1:10-11) "For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, {11} who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach, for the sake of sordid gain."

This morning I want to look at two ways that we can ensure good doctrine is being taught in a church. I want to look at the role of the shepherd or pastor in ensuring that there is good teaching. Paul told Timothy to pay close attention to his teaching. It is vitally important for shepherds to pay close attention to their teaching. Second, I want to look at the role of the congregation in ensuring that there is sound doctrine being taught.

### **Role of Shepherds**

Since most of you in the congregation are not in the role of a pastor, I will go quickly through the role of shepherds in ensuring sound doctrine.

#### **1. Study to handle the word of truth accurately.**

Paul tells Timothy in his second letter to him to study to show himself approved to God. Many denominations require their pastors to have a Masters of Divinity or Doctorate of Divinity. The reason for this is found in this verse. They want a pastor who has studied and been approved as a theologian, and can accurately handle the word of truth. The Scriptures do not require a pastor to go to seminary, but many church groups have this requirement.

At my parents church, their pastor was promoted to be the Bishop of the District. They had an associate pastor named Reuben who is an outstanding Bible teacher and preacher. He is also a great people person. Everyone in the church loved him. However, when it came time to appoint a new pastor, he was overlooked because he did not have a Masters of Divinity. Many people in the congregation were upset over the matter. Sometimes we make hard-fast rules that are not given by the Scriptures, and this is one of those cases.

In the Scriptures, most of the apostles did not have formal schooling. They were fishermen who knew how to mend nets, but were not necessarily experts at the Law. Peter was a good example of that. He became the leader at Jerusalem, but he did not have an education. When the lame man was healed by Peter in Acts 3, Peter preached and five thousand men committed their lives to Christ. That is powerful preaching. In chapter four, the Pharisees arrested Peter.

(Acts 4:3-4) "And they laid hands on them, and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. {4} But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand."

Peter testifies to the Pharisees, and Luke tells us that they understood that they were uneducated and untrained men. But, Luke also records that they recognized them as having been with Jesus. Discipleship and mentoring is still the best way to train people.



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(Acts 4:13) "Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John, and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were marveling, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus."

What a pastor really needs to do is diligently study the scriptures. He must study so that he can handle accurately the word of truth. A pastor needs to study, meditate, and pray over the Scriptures. He must make sure that he has the proper context of the passage. He must make sure that he understands the cultural background. He must understand how this passage lines up with other passages in the Scriptures. There is harmony in the Scriptures. He must make sure that the applications that he draws from the passage are in line with the Scriptures.

(2 Timothy 2:15) "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth."

I like to do my studying without commentators. I like to study, meditate, and listen to the Holy Spirit. But, when I am done, I like to look at what other preachers, commentators, and theologians have said about the passage. Sometimes I pick up something that I may have missed. Most of the time it is confirmation that I have not strayed from the text. My outlines are very similar to their outlines. If my understanding is different, that is a yellow flag. I need to revisit the text. It is highly doubtful that they are all wrong, and I have a hold on what is really true. This is just part of the process of making sure that a pastor handles accurately the word of truth.

For example, a few weeks ago we were looking at spiritual weapons. A verse in Romans 16 was used. The two applications given using this verse were to 1) get aggressive, 2) stomp on Satan. Is that what the passage is saying?

(Romans 16:20) "And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."

Let's take a look at the passage in context. There were people causing some divisions and dissensions in the church at Rome. Paul tells the church to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil. That is our part. We are to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil. The results are that GOD, the God of peace will soon crush Satan under our feet. We do not do the crushing. God will crush Satan under our feet in His time.

(Romans 16:17-20) "Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. {18} For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. {19} For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil. {20} And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."

This theme of being wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil was a theme that Paul had been emphasizing to the Romans. In Romans 12, he tells us to abhor what is evil and cling to what is good. To abhor means to hate what is evil. God wants us to hate evil and cling to that which is good. A good prayer is for us to have God's heart towards sin and evil so that we hate what is evil

and love what is good.

(Romans 12:9) "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good."

Paul goes on in Romans 12 to tell us not to pay back evil for evil to anyone. A few verses later he tells us not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good.

(Romans 12:17) "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men."

(Romans 12:21) "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

In Romans 13, Paul talks about government. He says that a government is not a fear for good behavior, but for evil. If we do what is good, we will have praise, but if we do what is evil, we may face the sword.

(Romans 13:3-4) "For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same; {4} for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil."

In Romans 16:19, Paul tells us to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil. First, we have to hate what is evil and cling to what is good. Next we are to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. And then, we come to the passage where Paul repeats himself, that we are to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. Part of fighting a spiritual battle is learning to be wise about what is good, and being innocent in what is evil. If we hate or abhor evil, we are more likely to be innocent in what is evil. Too often we enjoy what is evil, and so we do not repent and flee from the sin. When we make the right applications, the God of peace will crush Satan under our feet.

(Romans 16:19) "For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil."

A pastor can stir up a congregation's emotions with a loud voice and passion. But, getting people all worked up does not set people free. Heightened emotions does not set people free. Jesus said my disciples will know the truth, and the truth will set them free. People need to apply the word of God in their lives to find freedom. In this case, we need to abhor evil, be innocent of evil, be wise in what is good, and cling to what is good. Satan has nothing to hold onto in our lives when we are innocent of evil. This is just an example of how a pastor must make sure that the applications that he draws from the passage are Scriptural.

## **2. Practice what you preach.**

In Ezra 7:10, we find a great passage for preachers. It is one of my life verses. The Lord tells us that Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel. There are three things a preacher must do in this passage. He must study. He must practice. He must teach. I like to make things simple and easy to remember, so I use three P's

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for this passage. He must prepare, practice, and preach.

(Ezra 7:10) "For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel."

Jesus was always after the Pharisees for hypocrisy. They told people to do things but they were unwilling to do the things they were telling others to do. Listen to what he says about them in Matthew 23:3-4. "They say things, and do not do them. And they tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. God expects those who are preachers to practice what they preach.

(Matthew 23:3-4) "therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them. {4} "And they tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger."

I have personally found that when I apply God's word in my life, it gives me the wisdom to help other people practically apply the Scriptures in their lives. The goal is for us to be doers of the word, not merely hearers who delude themselves. The more practical I can make my teaching, the easier it is for people to apply. I learn the practical applications through being a doer myself.

Listen to what the Lord tells us in Psalms 111:10. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments." We gain a better understanding of the Scriptures as we apply them in our lives. Therefore, it is important for pastors to be doers of the word, not just preachers of the word.

(Psalms 111:10) "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever."

Paul continually refers to himself as an example. He tells the Thessalonians to follow his example. He offered himself as a model to them. He was practicing what he was preaching.

(2 Thessalonians 3:7-9) "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, {8} nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; {9} not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example."

He continually reminds Timothy and others to be an example to the flock. In 1 Timothy 4:12, he says, "let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example to those who believe." The congregation needs to see the preacher practicing what he is preaching. They need the example.

(1 Timothy 4:12) "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe."

In 1 Peter 5, Peter gives three charges to pastors. One of those charges is to be an example to the flock. I have a whole message on what it means to be an example to the flock, which I will share with you at some point.

(1 Peter 5:1-3) "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, {2} shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; {3} nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."

### 3. Preach only the word of God.

In the Protestant Reformation there were five solas. One of these was solas scriptura, which means only the Scriptures. Martin Luther wanted to move away from the papal interpretations and get back to what the Scriptures had to say. They found that the Scriptures actually said lots of things that were in contradiction to what the Catholic church

#### Five Solas of the Reformation

1. Sola scriptura ("by Scripture alone")
2. Sola fide ("by faith alone")
3. Sola gratia ("by grace alone")
4. Solus Christus or Solo Christo ("Christ alone" or "through Christ alone")
5. Soli Deo gloria ("glory to God alone")

was teaching. Solas Scriptura became a foundational principle to the Reformists. Unfortunately, John Calvin and others brought their interpretations of the Scriptures and people began to teach these doctrines of men. And, some of these teachings of Calvin do not line up with the Scriptures.

For example, Calvin taught Limited Atonement. It is part of the TULIP acronym. It means that Christ only died for the elect. But, the Scriptures do not teach that. John tells us that Christ was the propitiation for our sins. He also adds that it was not for our sins alone, but also for the sins of the whole world. The Calvinists do Scriptural gymnastics to say that the world means the elect. When the doctrines of men do not line up with the Scriptures, they twist the Scriptures to try and make them agree with their doctrine. We must not preach the doctrines of men. We must teach the word of God.

(1 John 2:2) "and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."

Many people preach the doctrines of men or denominational messages. I do not teach Vineyard doctrine. I teach the Scriptures. It so happens that I agree with the Vineyard doctrine, and so there are no problems with it for me.

In golf, you can play at a municipal golf course and have 100-yard wide fairways. On the PGA Tour, the fairways are about 40 yards. If you play in the U.S. Open the fairways are about 25 yards wide and the penalty of hitting it in the rough is severe. The Vineyard is like a municipal golf course. They give lots of room for interpretation. They are pretty conservative. They do believe in all the gifts and have a solid track record for healing. They are known for their intimacy with the Lord and outpourings of the Holy Spirit. Much of the music that the church has loved for the past few decades has come out of the Vineyard. For me, I just preach the word of God, and I never concern myself with the doctrines of the Vineyard. I do not have any problems getting out of play at the Vineyard.

## Six Characteristics of Healthy Churches # 1 – Sound Doctrine

But, all of us must be careful about the teachings that we have learned at our churches or from seminary. All of us are susceptible to this. The Lord tells us to preach the word of God. Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1-4 to preach the word.

(2 Timothy 4:1-4) "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: {2} preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. {3} For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; {4} and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths."

We are not only to preach the word, we are to preach the word in season and out of season. Paul also tells us to preach the whole counsel of God. We cannot just hang out on our favorite verse. A preacher must preach the whole counsel of God. Listen to what Paul tells the Ephesian pastors in Acts 20:26-27. Preachers must preach the whole counsel of God.

(Acts 20:26-27) ""Therefore I testify to you this day, that I am innocent of the blood of all men. {27} "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God."

The Lord rebukes the shepherds in Ezekiel 34 for not feeding the flock. They were feeding themselves, but not feeding the flock. Pastors have a responsibility to feed the flock.

(Ezekiel 34:1-3) "Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, {2} "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? {3} "You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock.'""

These are some of the ways that pastors can ensure that proper doctrine is taught. They can get mentored or disciplined, get seminary training, study the Scriptures to gain a comprehensive knowledge of the whole counsel of God, research what other great preachers have written, apply the Scriptures in their own lives, and make sure their hearts and motives are pure before the Lord. And most importantly, they need to be preaching the Word of God, not the doctrines of men. Now, let's take a look at the role of the congregation.

### **Role of Congregation**

Now, let's take a look at the role of the congregation. There are primarily four different things the congregation should do to ensure sound doctrine in the church. The first is to receive the word. The second is to examine the word of God. And the third is to apply the word of God. Fourth, individuals should take opportunities to teach the word in Small Groups and other settings. Let's take a look at these four areas. We will start by looking at receiving the word of God.

#### **1. Receive the Word.**

In Acts 17:10-11, Paul and Silas had just left Thessalonica and had come to Berea. When they began to preach to the Bereans, Luke tells us that "these were more noble-minded than those in

Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.”

(Acts 17:10-11) "And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. {11} Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so."

### **Receive with Eagerness**

The first thing that we can learn is that we should receive the word of God with eagerness. We should be excited about hearing the word of God. The Greek word is prothumia, which means towards passion. Thumos means to breathe hard. Pros means towards. It is somebody who is worked up or passionate. We are to be passionate about the Word of God. We are to be excited about receiving the word of God. We are to be eager to receive the Word of God. We should look forward to receiving the Word of God. The Word of God makes us adequate and equips us for every good work. We should be receive it with eagerness.

(2 Timothy 3:16-17) "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; {17} that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

### **Receive by Examination**

Second, the Bereans did not blindly receive the word. They examined the Scriptures to see if the Word of God lined up with what they were hearing. A congregation should receive the preached Word, but then carefully examine the Word.

One of the reasons that I like to give handouts is that I can include all the Scriptures that I use. It makes it easy for the congregation to go back and examine the word to see if it has been given in context, and to see whether these things are so. That is not the only reason that I use handouts, but it is an important one.

Here is just one example of how this works. Recently, we were told that we do not have weaknesses, we have strongholds. Does the Bible talk about weaknesses? What is a weakness? Is a weakness a stronghold? Does what I have heard line up with the Scriptures? Let's examine the Scriptures for just a minute to do a quick study together of a weakness to see whether these things are so. Let's be good Bereans for just a minute.

First of all, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:29-31 that he had weaknesses. If the Apostle Paul had weaknesses, we can safely assume that we have weaknesses. Paul said that he would boast to what pertains to his weakness. I do not think that Paul would be boasting about strongholds in his life. A weakness is not necessarily a stronghold.

(2 Corinthians 11:29-31) "Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? {30} If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness. {31} The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying."

## Six Characteristics of Healthy Churches # 1 – Sound Doctrine

In chapter 12, Paul continues his discourse about weaknesses. He says that he will not boast, except in regard to his weaknesses. Then, Paul talks about a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan that was given to him to keep him from exalting himself. We do not know what this thorn in the flesh was. We do know that he entreated the Lord three times to remove it, and the Lord did not remove it from him. Instead, the Lord tells Paul that His grace is sufficient for him, and that power is perfected in weakness. That is why Paul was willing to boast about his weaknesses.

(2 Corinthians 12:5-10) "On behalf of such a man will I boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses. {6} For if I do wish to boast I shall not be foolish, for I shall be speaking the truth; but I refrain from this, so that no one may credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me. {7} And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me-- to keep me from exalting myself! {8} Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. {9} And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. {10} Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

By the way, the Greek word for weakness is *astheneo*, which means to be feeble, diseased, sick, or weak. The NASB translates it as weakness and the KJV translates it as weakness in some places and as infirmities in other places in this passage. Apparently, Paul may have had an infirmity, illness, sickness, or other weakness that God chose not to remove from him. Different theologians and teachers have different interpretations of what that thorn in the flesh or messenger of Satan was. What we can safely say is that the context of the passage is about having weaknesses. Paul had some kind of weakness in his life and that he was content with that.

Strong's G770. *astheneo*, as-then-eh'-o; from G772; to be feeble (in any sense):--be diseased, impotent folk (man), (be) sick, (be, be made) weak.

### **Receive as God's Word**

We must receive the word with eagerness. Next, we should examine it to see if what we are hearing lines up with Scripture. Third, we must receive the word for what it really is, the Word of God. In Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, he thanks God that they had received the word of God's message when he had preached it. Receiving it is vitally important. But, Paul does not stop there. He says that they received it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which performs its work in us who believe. The word of God is to perform its work in us. This is God's word to us. It is not up to us to determine whether we will follow it or not. It is God's word to us. We must receive it as God's word. If we receive it as God's word, it will perform its work in our lives.

(1 Thessalonians 2:13) "And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe."

## **Receive with Humility**

Fourth, James tells us to receive the word with repentance and humility. He says to put aside all filthiness and all that remains in wickedness and to receive the word in humility. Repentance and humility are important keys in properly receiving the word. On the other hand, pride and a lack of contriteness prevent us from receiving and becoming doers of the word. Humility in a person allows them to not think more highly than they should. It allows them to consider that their ways and thoughts may not be right. It allows them to become like a child, who asks questions, and receives what is being said for what it really is, the Word of God that performs its work in us.

(James 1:21) "Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls."

## **2. Apply the word.**

The second responsibility of the congregation is to apply the word of God in our lives. Whether you are a pastor or a congregant, all of us are to apply God's word in our lives. James goes on to say that we are to prove ourselves to be doers of the word, and not merely hearers, who delude or fool themselves. He tells us to look intently at the word and to abide by it. We have to look intently at how this word applies to our lives, and to be willing to make changes in our thoughts and behavior based on the word. We are to focus on being doers of the word, not merely hearers who delude themselves.

(James 1:22-25) "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. {23} For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; {24} for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. {25} But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does."

We saw in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 that we must receive and accept the word of God's message for what it really is. Paul goes on to say that this word will perform its work in us who believe. We must receive it, and we must apply it. If we do not apply it in our lives, it will not perform its work in us.

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## **3. Learn to Teach.**

In Hebrews the author tells us that by this time you ought to be teachers. Instead of being teachers, they were still feeding on milk and not solid food. He says that solid food is for the mature, who have practices training their senses to discern good and evil.

(Hebrews 5:12-14) "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. {13} For everyone who partakes only of milk is not



## Six Characteristics of Healthy Churches # 1 – Sound Doctrine

accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. {14} But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil."

When people begin to study the Word of God so that they can teach it, they develop their senses. They begin to properly discern good and evil. This spiritual discernment will help safeguard the congregation from strange teachings. A church full of people with spiritual discernment will protect the church. A church full of people who are receiving the word with eagerness, receiving the word with humility and repentance, receiving the word for what it really is, the word of God, and who are verifying to see that the Scriptures support what is being taught will protect the church.

This morning we have looked at the first characteristic of a healthy church, which is to have sound doctrine. Sound doctrine is important because our lives reflect the doctrine and teaching that we submit ourselves to. Sound doctrine produces godly living. Sound doctrine nourishes the soul. Sound doctrine yields peace in our lives Sound doctrine produces good fruit in our lives.

**Introduction** (Acts 14, 8-18, 16:1-5, 1 Tim 1,

- The reason Paul wrote 1 Timothy is to teach us how to \_\_\_\_\_ ourselves in church. (1 Tim 3:15)
- Paul addresses Timothy as his \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Tim 1:1-2, Phil 2:19-22, 1 Cor 4:17)
- Timothy was an \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Thess 1-2)
- There are two \_\_\_\_\_ of apostles. (Acts 1:13, 1:21-26, Rev 21:14)
- Apostles lay \_\_\_\_\_ in churches. (Eph 2:20)
- Apostles safeguard the church from strange \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Tim 1:3-6, 4:16)
- These teachers were trying to bring people back under the \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Tim 1:3-11, Rom 3:19-22, Tit 1:10-11)

**Role of Shepherds**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ **to handle the word of truth accurately.** (2 Tim 2:15, Act 4:3-4, 4:13, Rom 16:17-20, 12:9, 12:17, 12:21, 13:3-4).
  - Applying \_\_\_\_\_ in our lives is what sets us free. (John 8:31-32)
2. \_\_\_\_\_ **what you preach.** (Ez 7:10, Matt 23:3-4, Ps 111:10)
  - A pastor should be an \_\_\_\_\_ to the flock. (2 Thess 3:7-9, 1 Tim 4:12, 1 Pet 5:1-3)
3. **Preach \_\_\_\_\_ the word of God.** (1 John 2:2, 2 Tim 4:1-4)
  - A pastor should preach the \_\_\_\_\_ counsel of God. (Ac 20:26-27)
  - A pastor should \_\_\_\_\_ the flock. (Ez 34:1-3)

**Role of Congregation**

1. **Receive the Word.**
  - We should receive the word with \_\_\_\_\_. (Acts 17:10-11, 2 Tim 3:16-17)
  - We should receive the word by \_\_\_\_\_. (Acts 17:11, 2 Cor 11:29-31, 12:5-10)
  - We should receive it as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Thess 2:13)
  - We should receive it with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. (James 1:21)
2. **Apply the word.**
  - We are to prove ourselves \_\_\_\_\_ of the word. (James 1:22-25, 1 Thess 2:13)
3. **Learn to Teach.**
  - We train our senses to \_\_\_\_\_ good and evil when we learn to teach. (He 5:12-14)

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