

# life group study guide



## GUARDING THE TRUTH

October 14, 2012

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1 Timothy 4:1-16

1 Timothy 4:16 - *"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."*

Christianity was birthed in history, based on historical facts. Jesus Christ made clear and exclusive claims. He offended most and attracted few. In the end, what he claimed and what he did cost him his life. Christianity was not just an experience. Things were believed and confessed and Christians were willing to stand and die for the truth.

"If any fact is clear, on the basis of this evidence, it is that the Christian movement at its inception was not just a way of life in the modern sense, but a way of life founded upon a message. It was based, not upon mere feeling, not upon mere program at work, but upon an account of facts. In other words it was based upon doctrine". J. Gresham Machen

In a cellar in Cologne, Germany, after World War II these words were found on the wall: "I believe in the sun, even when it is not shining; I believe in love, even when I feel it not; I believe in God, even when He is silent". Doctrine is important. It is living what you believe.

In Jesus day several belief systems existed - including the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Zealots, and the Essenes - and their followers used their philosophies and their religious views to deal with the problems of the day. Perhaps the best lesson we can learn from the Pharisees and Sadducees is to not be like them. Unlike the Sadducees, we are to believe everything the Bible says, including the miraculous and the afterlife. Unlike the Pharisees, we are not to treat traditions as having equal authority as Scripture, and we are not to allow our relationship with God to be reduced to a legalistic list of rules and rituals. We are not to ignore and hide from the world as the Essenes, nor force others violently to believe as we do as the Zealots did. Fairness and sincerity are not the same as truth!

You would think that the beauty of Christ and the truth and clarity of the Word would be so convincing that false teachers wouldn't have a chance. But we all have a huge problem.

**Q. How is it possible for believers to be deceived? (2 Chronicles 18:18-21)**

Jeremiah condemned the false prophets who were always saying, "Peace, peace!" when there was no peace (**Jeremiah 6:14**). The false prophets preached a popular message: there would be victory against Babylon. Jeremiah said, "*The prophets prophesy falsely... and My people love to have it so*" (**Jeremiah 5:31**). Even though Jeremiah was a true prophet of the Lord, the false prophets were rewarded by the king and Jeremiah was cast into a dungeon (**Jeremiah 38:6**).

The spread of false doctrine at Ephesus was producing ungodliness, ungodly behavior, unrighteousness. So Paul is very concerned that the Christians in the church at Ephesus are practicing godliness in their everyday living. He isn't dealing in some kind of theoretical theology. Rather, he is adamant that healthy doctrine produces healthy behavior. Unhealthy teaching produces a kind of lifestyle that is only a "*form of godliness*," a kind of outward religion and religious belief, but one which lacks its real essence and power. (**2 Timothy 3:5**)

**Q. How would you define "godliness"? What produces godliness in a person? (1 Timothy 4:7-8)**

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- Q. What is a godly attitude? (**2 Corinthians 5:9; 2 Corinthians 5:9; 1 Timothy 3:2-3; Romans 12:1-2**)
- Q. What are the qualities of a godly life, the spiritual fruit that comes from a pattern of yielding again and again to the Holy Spirit within us. (**Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Timothy 3:1-13**),
- Q. How is godliness different from embracing a strict morality?
- Q. What fruit does legalism produce in a person's life? (**2 Timothy 3:5**).
- Q. In what ways is this emphasis so different from the true gospel?
- Q. How do we live our lives in the way God intends for us? (**2 Peter 1:3**)
- Q. How do we get past our sinful nature in order to live a truly godly life?

There may be times when we come to God's Word that we find ourselves in a crisis of belief. We encounter concepts, ideas, and statements that are in conflict with what we have previously *believed* or have been *taught*, or that don't seem consistent with what we would *expect*. When this happens, we must decide where our faith is going to rest - will it be on what the Bible teaches; or on what we have been taught, believed or experienced, or even what is commonly accepted in the church or the world in which we live? We are not asked to believe the Bible, but to believe the One whom the Bible reveals. (**John 5:39-40**)

We face a clever schemer and a master deceiver. (**2 Corinthians 2:11**) He knows how to manipulate our deceitful desires. He can even change his appearance to look and sound like a messenger from God. He works where we would expect, in the black and grey areas, but he also sneaks into the realm of the white. In other words, he may come into the church, dressed as a follower of God, using Scripture, twisting it, promoting half-truths, in his attempt to confuse and neutralize the faith of believers.

What began with Eve's failure (**Genesis 3:3**) is now part of the fabric of our souls. Our real problem is not just with false teachers (**Romans 16:18; Ephesians 5:6**), but with a deceptive heart! We often deceive ourselves (**James 1:22; 1 John 1:8**). Benjamin Franklin once expressed it like this: "Who has deceived thee so often as thyself?" The same Paul who wrote, "*Let no one deceive you,*" (**Ephesians 5:6**) also warned "*Do not deceive yourselves.*" We continually think more highly of ourselves than we ought. (**Romans 12:3**) We say "I love Jesus with all my heart" and then disobey his commands. (**John 14:15**) We are now locked into a life and death struggle over what we will choose to rule our lives. Will we follow deceitful desires of the world or will we stand on the truth that is found in Jesus? (**Ephesians 4:20-24**)

How can we keep from being deceived in the last days? How do we protect ourselves? How do we win this battle?

- \* Unless we devour God's word we will be a casualty of evil and won't even know it. Fortunately, God has provided a very reliable way to assure that we will not be deceived - if we believe Him and follow what He says. - (**1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:8-9**) Be like the Bereans! - (**Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1**)
- \* We must pray. - It is only the Holy Spirit who can get God's truth from our head to our heart. Only he can open our eyes (**Psalms 119:18**) so that we want Jesus more than sin.
- \* We must ruthlessly and honestly judge every thought and word and act of our lives. We will never be perfect in this life, but we are commanded to strive for it. - (**Matthew 5:48**)
- \* Don't Believe Anyone Who Ignores, Or Disagrees With, God's Word - God's Word will *never* fail you, because *God will never fail you*. (**Luke 21:33**)
- \* Follow Christ, Obey God - (**1 Peter 2:21; 1 Corinthians 11:3**)
- \* Beware Of "Miracles" - (**Revelation 13:13-14**)
- \* "Prophet" Doesn't Mean "Profit" - (**2 Corinthians 2:17**) God's *true* servants are not

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interested in *taking* from you. They want to *give* to you, not worldly money that is quickly spent, but *true wealth*, the knowledge and understanding that will enable you to obtain the eternal spiritual riches that will last forever. God's true servants don't want your money. They want you to obey God. - **(Matthew 7:15-23; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Galatians 1:8)**

What are the signs of a New Testament church? First, Jesus Christ will be preached as the Son of God, the Savior and the *only* way to the Father. Second, it will be clearly taught that all men are rebellious and in need of their sins being covered by the blood of Christ or they are destined to suffer everlasting judgment. Third, you will hear the Bible affirmed as God authoritative and inerrant Word, whose words would be received as literal and obeyed. Fourth, you will hear the Gospel proclaimed without qualifications or hesitation. Fifth, you will sense an inward boldness in the believers that is founded not only on the truth of their beliefs, but upon the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, living within. Finally, you will see a people, standing firm, united in doctrine, not moved by the winds of culture, knowing that what their culture needs more than anything else is not an echo of worldly wisdom, but the sharp edge of God's redeeming Truth. It divides and dissects. It also heals our hurts.

God has declared His love for us, and has called us to obedience of his Word. Even Jesus '*learned obedience by the things which he suffered*' (**Hebrews 5:8,9**). This is a painful issue, but we are called to discern Grace, Obedience, Legalism, Phariseeism, Love, Ministering, Forgiveness, and Truth. These must be defined by scripture and not common Christian usage, and we understand that "*He has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness*" (**2 Peter 1:3**).

Moses words in **Deuteronomy 6:4-25** urging Israel to obey God and to be careful about falling into idolatry and following false teaching are still very pertinent today.

Regarding truth, own it - verses 6 - 4;

Regarding faith - live it - verse 7;

Regarding convictions - be courageous - verses 8 - 9;

Regarding material goods - beware, live a balanced life; verses 10 - 12;

Regarding the way of salvation - be uncompromising - verses 13 - 15;

Regarding survival - be obedient - verses 23 - 24.

What we believe determines our actions and attitudes. Remember also that there are consequences to what we believe and act on, so be prepared to take responsibility. Each of us is accountable for our beliefs and our actions. Our lives are to be directed in teaching and living out God's Word, sharing and spreading the message, yielding to the Spirit through worship and prayer, loving one another through life's ups and downs, and loving the world around us with no strings attached.