

Heavy Duty

Preparation for Sunday, February 24, 2013 “The Truth of the Gospel”

Monday - Tuesday

1. Avoid Distractions to the Truth – Read 1 Timothy 1:3-7

- Let's say you were the minister of education at First Ephesus. You walk by classrooms and see classes full of adults engaged in lively discussions over fascinating topics. Would you feel satisfied that your church had a successful small group ministry?
- From Paul's perspective, what was the problem with the “small group ministry” in Ephesus?
- Do you think Timothy, as a young pastor, was tempted to just abandon ship?
- Paul addressed teachers in verse 3, and hearers in verse 4. What is the role of each in keeping the group focused?
- Do you get the feeling from verse 7 that these people who “wanted to be teachers” were deliberately teaching false doctrine, or did they just not know what they were talking about? If they were deliberately teaching false doctrine, how would that change Timothy's approach? If they just didn't know better, how would Timothy approach it?
- Besides false teaching, what are other dangers that arise from a leader who doesn't know how to keep a class from getting distracted?
- What might be a sign that an individual Christian or a small group is wasting their spiritual time and effort on useless topics?
- What is the most important criteria to be used in evaluating false teaching?
- If this is the case, how well do you know the true gospel message? Would you be able to recognize a distortion of an Old Testament account?

Wednesday - Thursday

2. Take Your Stand on the Truth – Read 1 Timothy 1:12-17

- What, specifically, did Paul thank Christ for in this passage?
- Have you ever had a leader who saw something in you that you didn't see in yourself? How did you feel? Do you see any of that in this passage?
- Do you see any similarities between Paul saying he was acting “out of ignorance and unbelief” and what he said about those who wanted to be teachers in verse 7?
- Does it feel sometimes like your sins define you?
- How can holding on to past sins stunt the growth of our relationship to Christ?
- What impact can holding on to past sins have on our family relationships?
- In verse 15, Paul used the present tense when he referred to himself as a sinner, even though he was redeemed when he wrote it. Why?
- What is the difference between letting past sins define us and remembering that we are sinful?
- In verse 17, what was Paul's response to having received mercy from Christ?

Friday – Saturday

3. Battle for the Truth – Read 1 Timothy 1:18-20

- What does this passage indicate about Paul's personal feelings for Timothy?
- We don't know for sure what "the prophecies previously made" about Timothy were. What do you imagine Paul had said over Timothy as he mentored him? What words would his believing mother have said and prayed over him?
- Think about the empty arguments that characterized the Ephesian church, which we discussed in the first point. Contrast that with what Paul said the purpose of his instruction was in verse 18.
- Do you see our church as adequately preparing us to "strongly engage in battle"? Why or why not? How can we do better?
- Can you think of anyone you know personally who has suffered "the shipwreck of their faith"? Without naming names, can you describe that person?
- What do you imagine had happened to Hymanaeus and Alexander?

Additional Reading for this week:

1. Timothy and Paul
2. The Warfare a Christian Wages
3. Timothy's Ministry Assignments
4. The Ephesian Church