

ECCLÉSIA

GUARDING THE MESSAGE: 1 Timothy 1:3-7

SHARINGSTORIES

The situation in Ephesus was serious. Some of the people had already gone astray and were teaching foolishness. They were teaching a gospel that was essentially different from Paul's. People in the church were teaching myths they had created based on OT genealogies. Not only were they in error theologically, but their lifestyle was also wrong. Rather than exercising their responsibilities in the church as good stewards of God through faith, they were producing nothing except mere speculation. Paul got right to the issue at hand using strong language. His message was simple and straight-forward: command the opponents to stop their senseless babble. At the same time, he emphasized love. This was lacking in the false teachers' lives. Their message was wrong and so was the way they lived. Through Timothy, Paul called for the church to return to the true gospel message and the ensuing lifestyle of love.

What are some contemporary examples of this kind of teaching? Why do people find this attractive? Why do often good-intentioned people find themselves pulled to teach these kinds of things?

DIGGINGIN

The following quote from Richard Smoley resonated with many people when Ted read it Sunday morning. Let's read it again and think about it for a few moments. *"Christianity today often resembles an egg into which someone has poked a hole and sucked out all its contents, and then taken the shell, encrusted it with gold and jewels, and set it up as an object of veneration. In many ways, it remains a beautiful shell, but more and more people are finding that it no longer offers any nourishment."*

What is Smoley's analogy getting at? What is he saying about Christianity? Do you agree or disagree? Why are so many of us satisfied with a beautiful egg? Why is it so easy to not even notice the egg is empty?

GOINGDEEPER

This section is a serious one. It is tempting to think this was describing a situation in the past that we do not face today. That is dangerous thinking as we have the exact same challenges today.

What questionable teachings have you encountered that do not produce love and are divisive? How do you personally safeguard yourself regarding what you read, listen to, etc. re God?

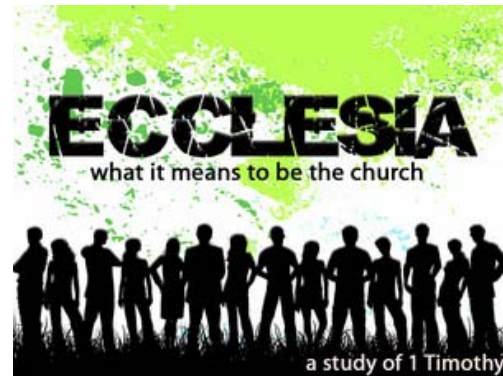
PRAYER

Spend this time discerning how best pray for one another. Praise God for one specific item and petition Him for one request on their behalf.

Thank the Father for guiding us every step of our lives. Ask Him to give us strength and courage to follow His lead. Ask Him to remind us to be who He designed us to be and to live out His love by loving others.

REFLECTION

*What one idea has the Spirit impressed on your mind and heart from this passage?
Do you see life as God sees it? (pure heart)
Do you see yourself as God sees you? (good conscience)
Do you see God as He truly is? (sincere faith)*



ECCLÉSIA WHAT IT MEANS TO BE THE CHURCH