**1 Timothy 1 – False Teaching in the Church**

*“John MacArthur [pastor/author] says no epoch in history has witnessed the rise of as many dangerous belief systems as the 20th century.  
In a recent address to students and faculty at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, MacArthur recounted scores of dangerous teachings that had dotted history, from pre-reformation sacramentalism to current day post-modernism and inclusivism. All of these, he said, run contrary to biblical truth.  
Baptist Press reports that in MacArthur’s words, "This is not a time for weak men in weak pulpits in weak churches preaching weak messages." MacArthur says the aim of good Bible teaching is to conform church members to Christ’s image.  
According to MacArthur, shallow preaching produces shallow worship. With that in mind, he says he can walk into a church and listen to the music for 15 minutes and tell how profound the people’s understanding of God is because it will be reflected in that.”*

* Fred Jackson and Jody Brown (2002)

***The pulpit isn’t the only source for false teachings in our churches today. Many others are in positions of influence and leadership who knowingly or unknowingly teach false things about God. Today we will see how Paul deals with this issue in a letter to Timothy and the Church at Ephesus.***

**Read 1 Timothy 1**

**Discussion Questions:**

1. According to verses 3-7, what is the problem in the Church at Ephesus?

* False teachings are circulating (probably taught by leaders of house groups) with a basis in Jewish law but involving myths and interminable genealogies.
* Teachers may have also been mixing in Hellenistic teaching with Jewish law but ultimately they were teaching things that are not only frivolous and useless, but untrue.
* The text suggests that the teachers were teaching false things because of ignorance of both a proper understanding of the law and of the heart of the gospel – God’s mercy made us righteous in Jesus’ death and nothing needs to be added to that.

1. a. For whom is the law intended? How does this apply to believers and non-believers?

“…Paul is saying that the law is not given to apply in some mystical way to people who are already ‘righteous,’ i.e., those already seeking to conform to the law. It is, rather, given to deal with people who are specifically violating its sanctions and to warn them against their specific sins (as the list in vv. 9b-10 goes on to do).” (bible.org)

* Believers are righteous already because the law was fulfilled in Jesus. The law identified their sins and then they turned to Jesus to accept his sacrifice and be counted righteous because of it. The law still shows believers their errors (since all people still sin) so they can continue to be made perfect (sanctified) with the help of the Holy Spirit.
* Non-believers are not counted righteous and so the law still exists to convict them of their sins. Once they are convicted, they have the opportunity to receive Jesus’ sacrifice as well and be counted righteous too by turning control of their lives over to God. Then they too receive the Holy Spirit who will help them to live well and become more like Jesus.
* Believers allow the law to show us where we still need work (when we fall short of God’s expectations). Then we can turn to the Holy Spirit and he will help us to obey God. We cannot obey God if we have nothing to obey/no guidelines to follow. But it’s still God’s grace that helps us follow (through the help of the Holy Spirit).

b. How do verses 1-11 apply to your life?

* What are some false teachings that you have seen? Have some teachings or ideas sidetracked your faith? E.g. earning God’s love rather than accepting grace.
* Need to know the Bible to discern what sound doctrine is and what is true Biblical teaching.

1. Why does Paul share his personal testimony? What do we learn about God and Jesus?

* So the church will remember the heart of the gospel (grace) and so they’ll get focused on what’s important and not the useless things with which they’re currently concerned.
* Christ came to save sinners (vs. 15) – That’s what matters most.
* We are all sinners (it’s good to remember the places from which God has brought each of us) and it is God (through Holy Spirit) who has mercy on us so we can daily live for him as an example to those whom God still wants to save.

1. Paul wrote to, amongst other things, encourage Timothy “to hold firmly to faith and a good conscience.” What are ways 1 Timothy 1 encourages us to do the same?

* Obviously, we should stay away from false teaching (we should not receive or spread things that are not true to the heart of the Gospel and to the teachings found in the Bible).
* We should hold firmly to the gospel as essential and do not get wrapped up in non-essential things which can lead to “useless chatter” and even false teachings.
* We should remember the intended purpose of Godly teaching - “love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. (v. 5)
* The gospel, God’s grace extended to all who believe, is the basis for all good and Godly teaching.

1. Share with each other areas in your life where your faith is challenged. Pray for each other for Christ’s power and breakthrough in these areas.