Healthy Churches

**Discern Truth From Error**

(1 Timothy 4:1-16)

*1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, 3 who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving 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 thanksgiving, 5 for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. 6 If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. 7 Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; 8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. 10 For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. (ESV)*

**Satan’s strategies for destroying Christ’s church**

Persecute it

Divide it

Poison it

***Acts 20:19-21***

*28Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29**I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.*

*Healthy churches are alert to various attacks on the gospel* (1 Tim 4:1-5)

* Demonic deception (v. 1)

***John 8:44***

*You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

***2 Corinthians 11:13-15***

*13For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.*

We can be “outwitted” (2 Cor 2:11)

He has “schemes” (Eph 6:11)

We can be “bewitched” (Gal 3:1)

\*2 Corinthians 10:3-5

* False teachers (v. 2)

“It is a terrible combination of words, since hypocrisy is a deliberate pretence and a lie a deliberate falsehood. So then false teachers, although seduced by deceiving spirits, are themselves intentional deceivers, however misleading their mask of learning and religion may be. They do not themselves believe what they are teaching.”

**John Stott**

***Acts 24:16***

*So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.*

* Unbiblical practices (v. 3-4)

***2 Timothy 2:16-18***

*16But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, 17and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.*

*Healthy churches counter the influence of false teaching* (1 Tim 4:6-10)

* The congregation is alert to false teaching (v. 6)
* They are careful not to be gullible (v. 7a)

“silly” also translated

“fit only for old women” (NASB)

“old wives’ fables” (NKJV)

“old wives’ tales” (NLT)

***Hebrews 5:11-15***

*11About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, 13for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. 14But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*

* They pursue godliness (vs. 7b-10)