

1. Where does self-discipline come into play as a role for Christians?
 - a) Where do you “draw the line” between God working *through us* and being disciplined in *our* efforts to seek God for our lives?
 - b) This is an underlying theme of this chapter.
 - c) In the opening set of verses, Paul warns against false teachers leading Christians astray by trying to be “more religious” by being self-disciplined and getting your focus off of God working *through* you in the Bible.
 - d) Yet in the latter verses, we see Paul urging Timothy to be disciplined in his Christian life. To “walk the walk” and live your life as an example for others to follow.
 - e) It almost sounds like a contradiction.
 - i) First Paul is warning that false teachers will lead others astray by getting them to be “closer to God”.
 - ii) Latter, Paul will urge Timothy to stay close to God through his conduct.
 - f) What you need to see, is the connection between these separate, but similar ideas:
 - i) False teachers lead Christians astray by getting them to take the wonderful things God has made for us in this world and trying to get us to reject them in order to be “more holy”. That is not what the Bible teaches.
 - ii) On the other hand, it does teach us to be disciplined. But the discipline comes not from abstaining from what God has given to us to enjoy, but the discipline of staying close to God to avoid false ideas.
 - a) Let’s compare our relationship to God with relationships to spouses. Anyone who has had a long-term relationship or has been married awhile knows that relationships are hard work. They require lots of time and patience. In order for that relationship to work, one must constantly give up *their* desires to please their partner.
 - (1) In exchange for that sacrifice, comes the benefit of a good relationship. The benefits far outweigh the cost *if* one works at it.
 - (2) That same principal applies to our relationship with God.
 - (a) God is asking the same thing of us. He expects us to let go of our desires for His desires. In exchange, we get more joy out of life than if we never turn to God in the first place.
 - (b) God wants us to have joy through our relationship with Him.
 - b) The common mistake we make in marriage is that we don’t listen to the needs and desires of our partners. We try to please them by doing the things we *think* they want versus those desires they *tell* us they want.
 - (1) The same principal applies in our relationship with God. The common mistake we make is that in order to please God, we try to do things that God never asked to do in the first place.
 - (2) That is what Paul warns Timothy about in the early verses of this chapter.
 - (3) It is about false teachers leading Christians astray. Not by denying Jesus, but by trying to make us “more religious” and doing what we *think* is right versus what the Bible commands us to do.

- c) This is not contrary to the second half of this chapter that focuses on Christian discipline. It is because we discipline ourselves to focus on what God desires for our lives that we avoid what false teachers and we think God “wants” from us.
 - g) With that we get back to Paul’s letter to Timothy. Paul switches to a new subject in Chapter 4, which is about dealing with false teachers.
2. Verse 1: The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.
- a) The verse opens with the statement “The Spirit clearly says...”
 - i) When did that happen? When/What did the Holy Spirit “clearly” this?
 - ii) The point is that this way the Holy Spirit speaking to Paul directly.
 - a) There is no direct Biblical cross-reference.
 - iii) God gave direct revelation to Paul about Christian doctrines.
 - iv) Remember how 1st Timothy opens:
 - a) Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope (1st Timothy 1:1)
 - b) Therefore, those commands are being taught in this letter.
 - b) Now we get to an interesting phrase: “The later times”
 - i) The word “later” means “more-lately, that is, eventually: —afterward, (at the) last (of all). (Strong’s Greek dictionary) The term is only used here in 1st Timothy.
 - ii) What Paul meant was during the church-age, this will happen.
 - iii) A similar term that is used a number of times in the New Testament is “last days”.
 - a) When we think of “last days”, we think of only a few days to go.
 - b) In Paul’s mind, last days and latter times refers to the time era post-Jesus.
 - c) Think of the opposite expression: “former” times vs. “later” times.
 - d) Former refers to would then refer to the time prior to Jesus’ 1st coming.
 - c) The reason I’m making such a big deal about this is it is a key part to the rest of the verse: In the latter times some will (1) abandon the faith and (2) follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.
 - a) It’s hard for me to comprehend somebody who has experienced the richness of the Christen life then wanting to turn away from it.
 - ii) This is talking about believing Christians!
 - iii) This verse says that some people, who *do* confess Jesus as God, will then turn away from their faith and follow things taught by demons.
 - iv) That shocked me to think about that.
 - a) I guess because I think, once you make a commitment to Jesus, you stick to it and it is there for life.
 - v) I was reminded that Jesus himself taught this principal. In Matthew 13, Mark 4 and Luke 8, Jesus tells the story of the 4 types of soil. The parable teaches that the 4 types of soil represents four types of people.
 - a) One of the four “type’s: won’t get it at all. They hear the word of God and it never takes root in their heart. Another type does get it and it grows.
 - b) But the other two types are the ones that “connect” to 1st Timothy:
 - (1) The shallow, rocky soil represents the heart of a man who hears the message and receives it with real joy, but he doesn’t have much depth in his life, and the seeds don’t root very deeply, and after a while when trouble comes, or persecution begins because of his beliefs, his enthusiasm fades, and he drops out. (Matthew 13:20-21, TLB)

- (2) The point is like Paul, Jesus himself predicted that some people would initially accept Jesus and the Gospel message. Either because of the desire of things of the world or fear of persecution, they drop out.
- vi) Which leads to another classical debate: Can one lose their salvation?
- a) This is a debate that I won't resolve in a lesson. There are good Christians on both sides of this issue.
- b) This verse appears to argue *in favor* that one can lose their salvation.
- c) The other side will argue, "well, they were never saved in the first place".
- d) The counter-argument is "what if they died *before* they walked away from their faith?"
- e) Personally, I don't like the "what-if" games.
- (1) God is perfect. A perfect God cannot learn, and knows all things.
- (2) Therefore God knows *in advance* who is going to be saved.
- (3) Therefore, we don't have to worry about the "what-if's" of life.
- (4) Our job is to believe, to *protect* the church against false teachers and to watch out for those who would lead us astray.
- f) Given all of this, I do believe one can *freely* walk away from God. If God gives us the free choice to accept him, he also gives us the free choice to walk away from him.
- (1) The corollary is *I do not* believe you can lose your salvation due to human error of "too much sin". We are imperfect people. Our salvation is not based on how good of a Christian we are, but our trust in Jesus. As long as you believe the gospel message, I don't believe one can lose their salvation. In Romans Chapter 7 Paul talks about the utter impossibility of any man to please God through his good efforts. Yet, the opening verse of Chapter 8 says that "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1, NIV)
- (2) There is also a difference between "healthy doubts" and "unhealthy doubts". All Christians go through periods of doubts. It is usually subtler issues like, "Am I getting too carried away with this stuff? Am I ignoring my family too much or my other commitments because I spend too much time on this Christian stuff?"
- (a) Further you may go through a tragedy and blame God for a while. Those are all examples of "healthy doubts".
- (b) "Unhealthy" doubts is full denial that any of this is "real" and you begin to live your life willfully ignoring God's commandments.
- (c) Remember that the only unpardonable sin in the Bible is to continually and willfully reject the Gospel message. If you are reading this study, you can't be guilty of this sin.
- (3) This is one of those debatable issues that Christians have been arguing over for centuries. There are good books out there on the topic of once-saved-always-saved debates. I always encourage people to listen to multiple views on this, and come to your own Bible-based conclusion.
- d) Ok, I've deviated way off topic here. ☺ Let's wrap up Verse 1.
- e) Verse 1 ends with the notion that some believers will "follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons." Those specific teachings are listed in Verse 2 and 3.

3. Verse 2: Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.
- a) Paul is saying the source of origination of these false teachers is demons.
 - b) What you are not going to see is an ugly guy in a red suit, horns and a pitchfork telling you to walk away from God. (Where did that stupid image come from anyway? ☺)
 - i) Who *would* walk away from God with something that scary?
 - c) The truth is Satan is much more subtle. His goal is to make you an ineffective witness for Jesus. Do you think he is going to do that by scaring you, or coming to you as a substitute claiming to show you “how to be a better Christian”?
 - i) That is what Paul is alluding to here.
 - ii) Demonic forces work *through* people. These people may not realize it, but they are being used by these forces.
 - a) Notice what title Jesus calls Satan: “Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. (John 12:31, NIV)
 - (1) He calls Satan “the prince if this world”. Satan is the one *in charge* of this world until Jesus comes in to reign in power.
 - (2) Notice Jesus said, the prince will be driven out.
 - (a) It is a future event. It doesn’t happen until Revelation 20.
 - (b) I don’t know about you, but I suspect either Satan is still around, or God is slacking on the job. ☺ (Yes, I’m kidding!)
 - d) Back to the verse: Who do the demonic forces “use” to lead Christians away from God? Verse 2 says, “through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.”
 - i) The phrase “hypocritical liars” means they aren’t practicing what they preach. They teach the Word of God not as someone who sincerely believes it, but like an actor reading his lines. Good actors sound sincere, but you don’t know their hearts.
 - ii) Let’s look at the next phrase: “whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.” That’s a pretty graphic word picture. Who are these people?
 - a) Personally, I don’t see it as somebody saying, “I want to stop this Christian movement. Maybe I can infiltrate their ranks and teach false doctrines.”
 - b) I suspect it is far subtler, although I am sure there is a minority of deviant cases like that through history. In secular bookstores and universities, you can find all sorts of people who write anti-Bible and anti Christian literature. But this is mostly targeted to non-Christian audiences to keep them away from God in the first place. That is why I don’t think that is the people in question in this verse.
 - c) I personally see it as people who start of sincere, but then “grow cold”.
 - (1) I see the attacks of Satan on them as follows “you hypocrite. You teach the Bible, but you know you don’t live it. I don’t know why you preach this stuff anyway when you don’t practice it. You might as well quit. The problem is you now make a living by being a preacher. We’ll you might as well keep going. You now know it’s a “crock”, but its too late to change.
 - (2) The other method is “you know pastor, your problem is you are just not holy enough. You are not working hard enough at your job. You need to be tougher on yourself. Boy is God disappointed with you. You need to work harder and make your congregation work harder on getting closer to God. Make them do more religious stuff so God will be happy with them.
 - (a) In both cases (#1 and #2 above), they are satanic lies.

- (b) That is what Paul meant by those “who have their conscious seared”. Those who get their focus off of what the Bible teaches and are listening to false reasoning & false teaching.
 - (c) Of course pastors can't live the perfect Christian life. Who can? It is not about being perfect, it is about letting God *work through us* and trusting that God *is* working through us to change us into the people He wants us to be.
 - (d) By the way, this point will become more obvious by the next verse. Speaking of which.... ☺
- 4. Verse 3: They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth.
 - a) Notice what Verse 3 does not say.
 - i) It does not teach that these false teachers talk about disobeying Jesus.
 - ii) It does not teach that these false teachers talk about not going to church.
 - iii) It does not teach that these false teachers talk about avoiding prayer.
 - b) These false teachers work by trying to get their followers to be more religious.
 - i) To paraphrase, “You people are a disappointment to God. You spend too much time in your humanistic desires. You lust after members of the opposite sex. You should avoid marriage as it gets you to lust. And look at your waists people. You lust after all of those rich foods. You are not being spiritual enough. You need to be more holy and avoid those good foods.
 - ii) Do you see how false-teachers can subtly lead you *away* from what the Bible teaches? Not by bluntly saying “disobey” God, but by trying to be *more* Godlike!
 - iii) Remember how Satan tempted Eve? Satan said if you eat this fruit “you will become more like God”
 - a) Satan said, “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Gen 3:4, NIV).
 - b) Satan attempts to get us *away* from God by appealing to human reason to get us to be more *like* God. The mistake is that it glorifies us and not God.
 - c) By not marrying in order to “be more pure”, by not eating certain foods “in order to be more pure”, you are putting the glory on and not God.
 - c) This leads back to the two topics at hand: 1) forbidding to marry and 2) food abstaining.
 - i) First lets talk about marriage. God ordained marriage.
 - a) “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24, NIV)
 - b) Given that, how can marriage be a sinful thing if it ordained by God.
 - c) The corollary is that God did not call all men and women to be married.
 - (1) “Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion. “ (1st Corinthians 7:8-9, NIV)
 - ii) Next, let's talk about food. God created food.
 - a) When you read the “creation” story in Genesis 1 and 2, you will notice God uses the expression over and over again “and it was good”. He made this and that, and each time said, “it was good”.
 - (1) God is not saying that to pat himself on the back “Hey, this creation stuff is pretty impressive if I do say so myself.” ☺

- (2) God is emphasizing “it was good” for our sake. All the things he created was good. It was designed to be used by man and bring glory to God. That includes the food groups.
 - (3) Which leads to the issue of Leviticus Chapter 11. There are all these types of animals and bugs that God forbids the Israelites to eat.
 - (a) Those are specifically given as commandments to the Jews and not to the Gentiles. This is made very clear in Acts 15 when the apostles decided on how Gentile Christians were to live. A letter was written on God’s standards for non-Jewish Christians specifically on this issue.
 - b) With that said, let’s get back to food.
 - (1) This is not an anti-fasting command.
 - (a) Jesus himself said, “when you fast...”(Matthew 6:16-17).
 - (2) The New Testament clearly teaches that fasting is a good discipline to get your focus off of food and onto God. The methodology of fasting is a discussion unto itself and I’ll save it for another day.
 - iii) The whole point of this verse is to warn against false teachers leading believers astray by trying to make them “more religious” and get their focus off of God working *through* them as opposed to the false idol of self discipline.
 - iv) I should also add a thought about the old Roman Catholic concept of “not eating meat” or “not eating red meat on Fridays”.
 - a) There is no Bible verse to support this idea.
 - b) If you want to give up a certain food in order get your focus on God, which is a form of fasting. That is biblically acceptable. The key is your attitude. To do this practice “because I’m suppose to” or “because that is what good Catholic’s do” is glorifying yourself and not God.
5. Verse 4: For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵ because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.
- a) Paul finishing the thought by saying there are no “bad-foods”.
 - b) Verse 5 says it is made “ok” because of 1) the word of God and 2) prayer.
 - i) The Word of God *teaches* us that it is ok to eat all types of food.
 - ii) Jesus said, “What goes into a man’s mouth does not make him ‘unclean,’ but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him ‘unclean.’”(Matthew 15:11, NIV)
 - a) During those times some false-teachers were arguing against Gentiles not eating “non-kosher” foods, like those listed in Leviticus.
 - b) Others were arguing against eating the meats bought in the marketplace because the animals were offered to idols.
 - c) The modern-principal is to avoid ideas and concepts that “make us closer to God” (here’s the key:) that God never intended for us to do.
 - iii) God *created* food and *created* marriage for our enjoyment. It is one thing to talk short-breaks from them for the purpose of prayer. It is another to avoid the blessings God has given.
 - a) “Food reference”: “You are certainly free to eat food offered to idols if you want to; it’s not against God’s laws to eat such meat, but that doesn’t mean that you should go ahead and do it. It may be perfectly legal, but it may not be best and helpful. Don’t think only of yourself. Try to think of the other fellow, too, and what is best for him. (1st Corinthians 10:23-24, TLB)
 - b) “Marriage reference”: “Do not deprive each other (husbands and wives) except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (1st Corinthians 7:3, NIV)

- iv) Have you ever stopped to think how insulting it is to God that we walk away from his blessings so we can be “more holy”?
 - a) Imagine giving somebody a great gift and they turn it down because they feel “its bad for them” when you *know* how wonderful that gift is.
- 6. Verse 6: If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.
 - a) Verse 6 is a “wrap-up” verse of the principals of the first five verses.
 - b) It commands Timothy to *teach* these concepts as well as to *live* these concepts.
 - i) For those of us with short memories, ☺ it is the concepts of 1) not “trying to be more holy” by abstaining from the blessings God has intended for us and 2) watching out for false teachers who try to teach these concepts.
 - c) The Greek word for “brought up in the truths can be translated “nourished” in the faith. It is the idea of a “proper diet” in the truths of scripture will lead you down the right path.
 - i) Personally, I think all of this talk about food made Paul hungry and use this term of “proper nourishment”. ☺
 - ii) Remember that Paul is not anti-food in any ways. Paul is talking about priority.
 - a) If one “nourishes” himself daily with the principals of scripture, one becomes “physically strong” in their Christian faith.
 - b) This concept is continued in Verses 7 and 8.
- 7. Verse 7: Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. ⁸ For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.
 - a) These two verses key on athletic references to good training.
 - b) Notice Paul is not anti-physical exercise.
 - i) Verse 8 states that “physical training is of some value”. “Some” is the key word.
 - ii) There is nothing wrong with eating a healthy diet and getting regular exercise. It benefits our physical life.
 - a) It also benefits our *spiritual* life. Let’s face it; a physical healthy person can better serve God than one who isn’t.
 - (1) I find being out of shape physically and out of shape spiritually go hand-in-hand. People who develop the discipline of “holy habits” often have enough discipline to live a fairly healthy lifestyle.
 - (2) Obviously there are exceptions. People do get sick and injured. I am speaking in generalities. God often puts us through long periods of physical difficulties to *test* our faith in Him.
 - iii) Getting back to exercise, I believe Paul’s main point is that if you exercise, that is fine. Sooner or later, the benefit will wear out. All people die. Good exercise has some benefit to live a better life, but that’s it.
 - iv) The secret of these two verses is to contrast *physical* exercise with *spiritual* exercise.
 - a) There is a Christian buzz term called “holy-habits”.
 - b) This is the idea of disciplining yourself.
 - c) The habit of regular prayer time.
 - d) The habit of regular time in God’s word.
 - e) The habit of financially giving weekly to the church.
 - f) The habit of being of service to other Christians.
 - v) If one develops the discipline to do *these* habits, there are eternal benefits as opposed to the relatively short-term benefits of physical exercise.
 - a) Remember that you are going to live forever. Your eternal destiny and *rewards* in heaven depend on your maturity as a believer and your loyalty to the specific ministry(s) that God has called for you.
 - b) These “holy habits” not only benefit your life *now*, but forever!

- c) I want to tackle one more thought on verse 7 before we move on. Paul says to “Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales”.
 - i) Both “godless myths” and “old wives' tales” are the same concept. It is about teaching and living concepts that are not found in the Bible.
 - a) The key is the word “godless”.
 - b) Unfortunately a lot of the historical church “traditions” are not found anywhere in the Bible. This is what Paul is warning against. The idea of teaching and living ideas that God never intended for us.
 - ii) “Old wives' tales”, this was an idiom of the day, and not an anti-women comment.
 - a) During that time, it was men who studied God’s word. The concept of “old wives’ tales” is non-Biblical stories and legends that were told.
8. Verse 9: This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance ¹⁰ (and for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.
- a) Paul takes Timothy off the details and back unto the big-picture.
 - b) The last couple of verses focus on the practically of teaching correct doctrine.
 - c) Verses 9 and 10 get back to why we should do this. The answer is in Verse 10: “Because we have put our hope in the living God.”
 - i) We are betting our eternal salvation, our lives, our rewards in heaven that the Bible is the Word of God and the instructions therein as to how to live that life.
 - a) God is not dead, he is living. Because he is living, we turn to him moment by moment for instruction and guidance for our lives.
 - d) Verse 10 continues with “we labor and strive”.
 - i) Pardon the slang, but Christianity should not be a half-ass’ed effort!
 - ii) God expects us to *push* ourselves to be obedient to Him.
 - iii) This goes back to the athletic references a few verses ago.
 - a) A good athlete disciplines himself in training.
 - b) The same goes with being a Christian. It is about hard work. It is about giving it “all you’ve got”.
 - c) The difference between a Christian and a pagan athlete is that we draw on God *for* our strength for our life, vs. the athlete who naively trusts in their own self-discipline as the origin of his or her ability.
 - (1) Paul said, “I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:12-13, NIV)
 - e) OK, its time to take on the tough part of Verse 10: “the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.”
 - i) Does this verse teach that all men are saved? It says “Savior of all men”.
 - a) Cult groups like the Jehovah Witnesses don’t believe anyone goes to hell. They use verses like this as their reference.
 - b) This is not what the Bible teaches:
 - (1) “I saw the dead, great and small, standing before God; and The Books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to the things written in The Books, each according to the deeds he had done.... This is the Second Death—the Lake of Fire. And if anyone’s name was not found recorded in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire. (Revelation 20 12-13, 14b-15, TLB).

- ii) I take the view the Bible does not contradict itself. Once you learn to read verses *in context*, you won't see contradictions. There are verses that are difficult to explain, but I don't see them as contradictory.
 - iii) Remember that Paul is talking about disciplining yourself as a Christian to be fully pleasing to God. This is a call both as a minister and as laymen in the church.
 - a) Now Paul is saying God is the savior of all men, especially those who believe."
 - b) The context of this verse is Paul is talking about the *benefits* of drawing closer to God. This is not a saved vs. non-saved issue.
 - c) All people benefit from the blessings of God. The sunshine, the rain, the food is a blessing to all.
 - (1) Those who seek God and *understand* that God is the one who provides these things are *especially* blessed more than those who don't get it. Look at the phrase again: "the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe."
 - d) Another way to look at this verse is the fact that we *live*. Let's face it, God could have wiped out Adam and Eve for sinning and abolish the whole human race at that point. But God, in his grace, let us live on. That is the idea behind being the "Savior" of all men", but especially those who believe because we comprehend that fact.
9. Verse 11: Command and teach these things.
- a) This is the second time Paul specifically states this fact.
 - b) In Verse 6, Paul says, "If you instruct the brethren in these things..."
 - c) The emphasis is on *teaching* them to others, as well as living them yourself.
10. Verse 12: Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.
- a) In this culture, the word "young" meant anybody under 40. So Timothy could have even been in his late 30's at this time.
 - b) There is age-bigotry both ways. We'll talk about this more in the next chapter.
 - i) Older people can look down at younger ministers and say, "what do *you* know, you haven't lived live yet".
 - ii) This is what Paul is preaching against here in this verse.
 - iii) This is why Paul uses the "commandment" phrase in Verse 11. This way, Timothy could use Paul's letter as one of authority.
 - iv) Timothy's role is not to wave Paul's letter in front of the elders and say, "respect me" because Paul says so. Look at the rest of verse: "but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."
 - a) The idea here is to *live as an example*.
 - b) People will take you seriously as a teacher, leader or as a witness for Jesus by your conduct. What you say is not as important as how you live.
 - c) This lead's back to my opening arguments in this lesson. We are to have discipline in our lives as Christians. That discipline helps us to be good witnesses to others. We need to draw on God's strength in order to *be* that type of witness.
 - i) The "holy habits" I mentioned earlier *able* you to be the type of leader, the type of elder, the type of parent, husband, wife, child, etc. that God *wants* you to be. That is the point Paul is trying to drive home.
 - ii) Read Verse 12 again. The key word is "example".
 - d) Paul lists five methods by which one leads by example: 1) speech, 2) in life, 3) in love, 4) in faith and 5) in purity. It is really not necessary to expound upon these terms. They are self-explanatory. It does make a good checklist for your own life.

11. Verse 13: Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.
- a) Paul urges three things here in this verse:
 - i) 1) Public reading of Scripture, 2) to preaching & to teaching.
 - ii) This verse encourages the *reading* of Scripture in church service.
 - a) Remember during those days, most of the world was illiterate. Also, there were very few copies of the Bible books. Public reading was a necessity.
 - b) We as Americans, have the advantage of great education and great accessibility to God's word. I do believe in *reading* of Scripture in public. We have the advantage of being able to follow along in our Bibles. The combination of hearing and seeing the words together helps our memory.
 - iii) "Preaching and teaching" are similar ideas.
 - a) Preaching tends to be "topical" messages on Bible principals.
 - b) "Teaching" is straightforward type of Bible study where one explains the meaning of the text as one goes along.
 - c) Good pastors do both. One can preach and cover a section of text. One can teach straight through the Bible and stop every now and then and preach on topic. That is the idea Paul is getting across.
12. Verse 14: Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.
- a) What exactly "is" this gift is debatable. There is no direct reference to Timothy's spiritual gifts in the Bible. Personally I believe it is the spiritual gift to preach and teach the word of God, as well as to be a leader in the church.
 - i) I take the view that all born-again believers have some spiritual gifts. One of the joys of Christianity is discovering what your gifts are.
 - ii) Spiritual gifts are given by God to be used to glorify God. If you have a talent to teach God's word, or just enjoy being of service, etc., that is a spiritual gift.
 - a) To know that you have a gift is that 1) you just "want" to use that gift and others can see that you have been given more talent or desire than others to use that gift.
 - b) That is what I see here with Timothy. Paul is giving all of this practical wisdom about preaching and teaching. Therefore, I believe that's his gift.
 - c) "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; (1st Corinthians 12:4, 8, NASB)
 - b) Notice Verse 14 does not say that the gift comes from "the laying of hands on him."
 - i) There is no "magic" performed by the laying of hands. The laying of hands means we identify with that person. It is a public recognition.
 - ii) The verse says that Timothy received the gift when the hands were laid on him.
13. Verse 15: Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.
- a) A few verses ago, Paul was comparing the disciple of a Christian to an athlete.
 - i) Earlier he was saying that an athlete trains hard for his particular sport.
 - ii) That is what Paul is pushing Timothy to do, as well as you and me.
 - iii) Verse 15 opens with be diligent in these matters. The rest of the verse is just the details. ☺
 - b) Paul says the benefit of the self-discipline is so "everyone can see your progress".
 - i) This is not a "hey, look at me" line. This is a call to lead-by-example.

14. Verse 16: Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.
- a) This verse does not say “if you work hard, you will make it into heaven.”
 - i) That would be contradictory to the rest of the Bible.
 - b) This is about growing in maturity as a believer.
 - c) It *is* about salvation in the idea that you are working on your heavenly rewards.
 - d) Personally, I don’t want to be in heaven by the skin of my teeth.
 - i) I don’t want to say, “Well, I’m saved now. Time to relax and wait for death. ☺
 - ii) I want to grow in my relationship with God.
 - iii) I want to be diligent in my “holy habits” of prayer, study time, being of service to God through others.
 - iv) Why? Because I am going to live for eternity.
 - v) How I spend my eternity depends on my life here.
 - a) Is that fair? What about babies who die?
 - (1) I don’t know if it’s fair. Further, I can’t explain all mysteries.
 - (2) All I do know is that God is in charge, and if he is in charge, he gets to make the rules.
 - b) Knowing that my eternal destiny and the rewards thereof, depend upon my obedience to God, and my growth and faith in those habits, I do discipline myself.
 - (1) If that is not motivation enough, here is the other good news. It benefits your life today. Even if I’m wrong about eternity (I’m not saying I am!), I can see the daily benefits of walking close to God.
 - (2) That is what Paul meant by “saving yourself and your hearers”.
 - (3) Paul gives a similar thought in Philippians:
 - (4) “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. (Philippians 4:12-13, NIV)
 - vi) This takes us full circle to my opening arguments.
 - a) Christianity is not a works-based religion.
 - (1) Our salvation comes only from what Jesus did for us.
 - (2) Acting on that knowledge, God wants us to grow in maturity.
 - (a) Because of that knowledge, God wants to do develop disciplined habits for our benefit, both in this life and the life to come. That is why it is not a contradiction to say Christianity is not a work-based religion.
 - (3) The corollary to that is that God works best when he works *through* us. The secret of living the Christian life is not “trying harder”, but letting God work through you to make you a better person.
 - (4) That does not mean lying on your bed and waiting for God to strike you with an idea. It means to *seek* God through prayer, through his Word and through whatever God has called you to do and by those means God will work though you to grow you as a Christian and help “build up the body of Christ”, which is the church.

15. With that, let's pray. Father, moment by moment you call us to walk with you. This means to cast away our own ambitions, our own ideas and seek what you want best for our life. You taught us "your yoke is easy, your burden is light"¹. Help us to remember that eternity is at stake. Not just for our own rewards, but for the benefit of those who we influence in our daily life. Help us you seek you so that we may grow in the particular ministry(s) that you have called for our lives. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

Bonus Material – Below is the class handouts. It is a "summary" version of this lesson.

¹ Matthew 11:30, KJV, et.al.

Notes for 1st Timothy – Chapter 4 (Page 1 of 6)

Where does self-discipline come into play as a role for Christians?

Introduction – Two Themes of Chapter 4: Beware of False Teachers and “Watch Your Conduct”

1. In the opening set of verses, Paul warns against false teachers that lead Christians astray by trying to be “more religious”.
2. These false teachers want you to be more self-disciplined and getting your focus off of God.
3. Latter in Chapter 4, Paul is urging Timothy to be disciplined in his Christian life. To “walk the walk” and live your life as an example for others to follow.
4. It almost sounds like a contradiction.
 - a. First Paul is warning that false teachers will lead others astray by getting them to be “closer to God”. Latter, Paul will urge Timothy to stay close to God through his conduct.
5. False teachers lead Christians astray by getting them to take the wonderful things God has made for us in this world and trying to get us to reject them in order to be “more holy”. That is not what the Bible teaches.
6. On the other hand, the bible does teach us to be disciplined. The discipline comes not from abstaining from what God has given to us to enjoy, but the discipline of staying close to God to avoid false teachings.

Verse 1: “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.” (NIV)

1. When did “The Spirit clearly say...” actually happen? Where is it mentioned in the bible?
 - a. There is no direct Biblical cross-reference.
 - b. The point is the Holy Spirit is speaking directly to Paul.
 - c. God gave direct revelation to Paul about Christian doctrines.
 - d. Remember how 1st Timothy opens:
 - i. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope (1st Timothy 1:1)
2. What does “the latter times” mean?
 - a. The word “later” means “more-lately, that is, eventually: —afterward, (at the) last (of all). (Strong’s Greek dictionary) The term is only used here in 1st Timothy.
 - b. “The Latter Times” refers to the church-age (about 2,000 years and counting).
 - c. A similar term that is used a number of times in the New Testament is “last days”.
 - i. In Paul’s mind, last days and latter times refers to the time era post-Jesus.
 - ii. Think of the opposite expression: “former” times vs. “later” times.
 - iii. Former refers to would then refer to the time prior to Jesus’ 1st coming.
 - iv. “But in these last days he (God) has spoken to us by his Son” (Heb. 1:2a NIV)
3. In the “latter times”, some will “(1) abandon the faith and (2) follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”
 - a. This verse says that some people, who do confess Jesus as God, will then turn away from their faith and follow things taught by demons.
 - b. Jesus said, “The shallow, rocky soil represents the heart of a man who hears the message and receives it with real joy, but he doesn’t have much depth in his life, and the seeds don’t root very deeply, and after a while when trouble comes, or persecution begins because of his beliefs, his enthusiasm fades, and he drops out. (Matthew 13:20-21, TLB)
 - c. The point is like Paul, Jesus himself predicted that some people would initially accept Jesus and the Gospel message. Either because of the desire of things of the world or fear of persecution, they drop out.

Notes for 1st Timothy - Chapter 4 (Page 2 of 6)

Verse 1 leads to a classical debate: Can one lose their salvation?

1. This is a debate that I won't resolve in a lesson.
2. There are good bible scholars on both sides of this issue.
3. This verse appears to argue in favor that one can lose their salvation.
 - a. The other side will argue, "Well, they were never saved in the first place".
4. John's View:
 - a. God is perfect. A perfect God cannot learn, and therefore God knows all things.
 - b. Therefore God knows in advance who is going to be saved.
 - c. Therefore, we don't have to worry about the "what-if's" of life.
 - d. Our job is to do what God called us to do (e.g., believe in Jesus, obey God's commandments, and to watch out for false teachers, etc.).
5. There is also a difference between "healthy doubts" and "unhealthy doubts".
 - a. All Christians go through periods of doubts.
 - i. A "healthy doubt" may be, "Am I getting too carried away with this stuff?"
 - ii. Further you may go through a tragedy and blame God for a while.
 - b. "Unhealthy" doubts is full denial that any of this is "real" and you begin to live your life willfully ignoring God's commandments.
 - c. Remember that the only unpardonable sin in the Bible is to continually and willfully reject the Gospel message. If you are reading this study, you can't be guilty of this sin.

Verse 2 " (False) teachers (are)...hypocritical liars, ...consciences have been seared as with a hot iron."

1. Paul is saying the source of origination of these false teachers is demons.
2. What you are not going to see is an ugly guy in a red suit, horns and a pitchfork telling you to walk away from God. (Where did that stupid image come from anyway? ☺)
3. Satan is much more subtle than that.
 - a. His goal is to make you an ineffective witness for Jesus.
 - b. Do you think he is going to do that by scaring you? False teachers will come as a substitute claiming to show you "how to be a better Christian".
 - c. Demonic forces work through people.
 - i. These people may not realize it, but they are being used by these forces.
 - ii. Notice what title Jesus calls Satan: "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. (John 12:31, NIV)
 - iii. Jesus calls Satan, "The prince if this world". Satan is the one in charge of this world until Jesus comes in to reign in power on earth. (See Revelation 20)
4. The phrase "hypocritical liars" means they aren't practicing what they preach.
5. "Whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron."
 - a. Personally, I don't see it as somebody saying, "I want to stop this Christian movement. Maybe I can infiltrate their ranks and teach false doctrines."
 - b. It is far subtler, although there is a minority of deviant cases like that through history.
 - c. I personally see it as people who start of sincere, but then "grow cold".
 - i. Satan attacks them as follows, "You hypocrite. You teach the Bible, but you know you don't live it...it's too late now, you might as well go through the motions".
 - ii. Satan's other common attack is " "You know pastor, your problem is you are just not holy enough. You are not working hard enough at your job. You need to be tougher on yourself. Boy is God disappointed with you."
 - iii. That is what Paul meant by those "who have their consciences seared". Those who get their focus off of what the Bible teaches and are listening to false reasoning.

Notes for 1st Timothy - Chapter 4 (Page 3 of 6)

Verse 3-6: False teachers forbid people to marry and abstain from certain foods.

1. Notice what Verse 3 does not say:
 - a. It does not teach that these false teachers talk about disobeying Jesus.
 - b. It does not teach that these false teachers talk about not going to church.
 - c. It does not teach that these false teachers talk about avoiding prayer.
2. These false teachers work by trying to get their followers to be more religious.
3. How did Satan tempt Eve? Satan said if you eat this fruit “you will become more like God”.
 - a. Satan said, “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Gen 3:4, NIV).
4. A false teacher may teach you to avoid marriage “to be more religious”. God ordained marriage.
 - a. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24, NIV)
 - b. The corollary is that God did not call all men and women to be married.
 - i. “Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion. “ (1st Corinthians 7:8-9, NIV)
5. False teachers may teach you to avoid foods “to be more religious”. God created food.
 - a. When you read the creation story in Genesis 1 and 2, you will notice God uses the expression over and over again “it was good”.
 - i. God is not saying that to pat himself on the back “Hey, this creation stuff is pretty impressive if I do say so myself.” ☺
 - ii. God is stating, “It was good” for our sake. All the things He created were good.
 - b. There are certain food groups for Jews not to eat in Leviticus Chapter 11.
 - i. Those are specifically given as commandments to the Jews and not to the Gentiles.
 - ii. This is made very clear in Acts 15
 - c. “Here is what I have seen: It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage.” (Ecclesiastes 5:18, NKJV)
 - d. Jesus said, “What goes into a man’s mouth does not make him ‘unclean,’ but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him ‘unclean.’” (Matthew 15:11, NIV)
6. The whole point of this verse is to warn against false teachers leading believers astray by trying to make them “more religious” and get their focus off of God
7. God created food and created marriage for our enjoyment. It is one thing to talk short-breaks from them for the purpose of prayer. It is another to avoid the blessings God has given.
 - a. Food reference”: “You are certainly free to eat food offered to idols if you want to; it’s not against God’s laws to eat such meat, but that doesn’t mean that you should go ahead and do it. It may be perfectly legal, but it may not be best and helpful. Don’t think only of yourself. Try to think of the other fellow, too, and what is best for him. (1st Corinthians 10:23-24, TLB)
 - b. “Marriage reference”: “Do not deprive each other (husbands and wives) except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (1st Corinthians 7:3, NIV)
 - c. Have you ever stopped to think how insulting it is to God that we walk away from his blessings so we can be “more holy”?
 - i. Imagine giving somebody a great gift and they turn it down because they feel “its bad for them” when you know how wonderful that gift is.

Notes for 1st Timothy - Chapter 4 (Page 4 of 6)

Verses 7-8: "Train yourselves to be godly"

1. These two verses key on athletic references to good training.
2. Verse 8 states that "physical training is of some value". "Some" is the key word.
 - a. There is nothing wrong with eating a healthy diet and getting regular exercise. It benefits our physical life as well as our spiritual life.
 - b. A healthy person can serve God better than one who doesn't live a healthy lifestyle.
 - c. I find being out of shape physically and out of shape spiritually go hand-in-hand. People who develop the discipline of "holy habits" often have enough discipline to live a fairly healthy lifestyle.
 - d. Obviously there are exceptions; people do get sick and injured. God often puts us through long periods of physical difficulties to test our faith in Him.
2. The secret of these two verses is to contrast physical exercise with spiritual exercise.
 - a. There is a Christian buzz term called "holy-habits". Examples include:
 - i. The habit of regular prayer time.
 - ii. The habit of regular time in God's word.
 - iii. The habit of financially giving weekly to the church.
 - iv. The habit of being of service to other Christians.
 - b. These habits have eternal benefits as opposed to the short-term benefits of exercise.
3. "Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales".
 - a. Both "godless myths" and "old wives' tales" are the same concept.
 - b. It is about teaching and living concepts that are not found in the Bible.
 - c. The key is the word "godless".
 - d. This is the danger of obeying "church traditions" versus what the bible teaches.

Verses 9-10: "(We) put our hope in the living God, ...Savior of all men, ...especially of those who believe"

1. Paul calls God "The Living God". Because He is living, we turn to him moment by moment for instruction and guidance for our lives.
 - a. Pardon the slang, but Christianity should not be a half-ass'ed effort!
 - b. God expects us to push ourselves to be obedient to Him.
 - c. This goes back to the athletic references of self-discipline a few verses ago.
2. The difference between a Christian and a pagan athlete is that we draw on God for our strength for our life, vs. the athlete who trusts in their own self-discipline as the origin of his or her ability.
 - a. Paul said, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:12-13, NIV)
3. Does this verse teach that all men are saved? It says "Savior of all men".
 - a. Cult groups like the Jehovah Witnesses don't believe anyone goes to hell. They use verses like this as their reference.
 - b. This is not what the Bible teaches: "This is the Second Death—the Lake of Fire. And if anyone's name was not found recorded in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire." (Revelation 20 14b-15, TLB).
 - c. The context of this verse is Paul is talking about the benefits of drawing closer to God. This is not a saved vs. non-saved issue.
 - d. All people benefit from God's blessings. The sunshine, the rain, the food is blessed all.
 - e. Those who seek God and understand that God is the one who provides these things are especially blessed more than those who don't get it. Look at the phrase again: "the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe."

Notes for 1st Timothy - Chapter 4 (Page 5 of 6)

Verse 11: “Command and teach these things”

1. The emphasis is on teaching them to others, as well as living them yourself.

Verse 12: “Don’t let anyone look down at you because you are young...be an example” (Paraphrased)

1. In this culture, the word “young” meant anybody under 40.
 - a. So Timothy could have even been in his late 30’s at this time.
2. Timothy’s role is not to wave Paul’s letter in front of the elders and say, “respect me” because Paul says so. Look at the rest of verse: “But set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.”
 - a. The idea here is to live as an example.
 - b. People will take you seriously as a teacher, leader or as a witness for Jesus by your conduct. What you say is not as important as how you live.
3. Paul lists 5 methods how one leads by example: 1) speech, 2) life, 3) love, 4) faith and 5) purity.

Verse 13: “Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching”.

1. This verse encourages the reading of Scripture in church service.
 - a. Remember during those days, most of the world was illiterate.
 - b. Also, there were very few copies of the Bible books. Public reading was a necessity.
2. “Preaching and teaching” are similar ideas.
 - a. Preaching tends to be topical messages on Bible principals.
 - b. “Teaching” is straightforward type of Bible study where one explains the meaning of the text as one goes along.
 - c. Good pastors do both. One can preach and cover a section of text. One can teach straight through the Bible and stop every now and then and preach on topic.

Verse 14: “Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.”

1. What exactly “is” this gift is debatable. There is no direct reference to Timothy’s spiritual gift(s).
2. I take the view that all born-again believers have some spiritual gifts.
 - a. One of the joys of Christianity is discovering what your gifts are.
 - b. Spiritual gifts are given by God to be used to glorify God.
 - c. To know that you have a gift is that you just want to use that gift and others can see that you have been given more talent or desire than others to use that gift.
 - d. “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit ... For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; (1st Corinthians 12:4, 8, NASB)
3. Notice Verse 14 does not say that the gift comes from “the laying of hands on him.”
 - a. There is no “magic” performed by the laying of hands. The laying of hands means we identify with that person. It is a public recognition.
 - b. The verse says that Timothy received the gift when the hands were laid on him.
 - i. It does not say that Timothy received the gifts “by” the laying of hands.

Verse 15: “Be diligent ... so that everyone may see your progress.”

1. Paul says the benefit of the self-discipline is so “everyone can see your progress”.
2. This is not a “hey, look at me” line. This is a call to lead-by-example.

Notes for 1st Timothy - Chapter 4 (Page 6 of 6)

Verse 16: “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

1. This verse does not say “if you work hard, you will make it into heaven.”
 - a. That would be contradictory to the rest of the Bible.
 - b. This is about growing in maturity as a believer.
2. It is about salvation in the idea that you are working on your heavenly rewards.
3. Personally, I don’t want to be in heaven by the skin of my teeth.
 - a. I never want to say, “Well, I’m saved now. Time to relax and wait for death.” ☺
 - b. I want to grow in my relationship with God.
 - c. I want to be diligent in my “holy habits” of prayer, study time, being of service to God through others.
 - d. Why? Because I am going to live for eternity.
 - e. How I spend my eternity depends on my life here.
 - f. Is that fair? What about babies who die?
 - i. I don’t know if it’s fair. Further, I can’t explain all mysteries.
 - ii. I do know is that God is in charge, and if he is in charge, he gets to make the rules.
 - g. Knowing that my eternal destiny and the rewards thereof, depend upon my obedience to God, and my growth and faith in those habits, I do discipline myself
 - i. That is what Paul meant by “saving yourself and your hearers”.
4. Paul gives a similar idea in Philippians:
 - a. “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. (Philippians 4:12-13, NIV)

Concluding Thoughts: Christianity is not a works-based religion.

1. Our salvation comes only from what Jesus did for us.
2. Acting on that knowledge, God wants us to grow in maturity.
3. Because of that knowledge, God wants to do develop disciplined habits for our benefit, both in this life and the life to come.
 - a. Christianity is not a work-based religion. It is based on faith alone. We act on that faith and out of gratitude we live a life of obedience so that God can mature us in our faith.
4. God works best when he works through us. The secret of living the Christian life is not “trying harder”, but letting God work through you to make you a better.
 - a. That does not mean lying on your bed and waiting for God to give you instructions. It means to seek God through prayer, through his Word and through whatever God has called you to do and by those means God will work through you to grow you as a Christian and help “build up the body of Christ”, which is the church.