

Staying on Course  
June 23, 2019  
Allen Power

1 Timothy 4

Opening Discussion: One of the trendy topics in health and diet is “clean eating.” **Generally speaking, what does the term “clean eating” mean? What is “clean food” vs “dirty food?” How can reading the ingredients and nutrition facts sometimes shock us about a favorite food?**

- What does that opening have to do with 1 Timothy chapter four?
- This chapter alludes to food in a couple of places, but a key verse (4:6) speaks to being “nourished by the words of the faith.”
- The Apostle Peter taught: <sup>2</sup> *Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—* 1 Peter 2:2 (ESV)
- When we’re talking about spiritual nourishment, the equivalent of “real food” means taking in God’s word with no additives or extra substances.
- False teachers were a problem in the church in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1.)
- False teachers are most successful when they take what appears to be godly teaching and add or subtract things that turn it into spiritual “junk food,” or worse, real poison!
- Paul wrote to Timothy about defending against demonic deception and being the kind of pastor who nourishes and trains a healthy church.
- Since my audience is not a room full of pastors, I’m focusing on how you and I as the “congregation” of followers of Christ can apply this chapter in two ways: 1) Is my pastor a “good servant of Christ” that “nourishes” the church with truth or a “hypocrite” with a junk food agenda? 2) How can I personally get better at nourishing myself with the real food of God’s truth?

Big Idea: In a time of much demonic deception, how can I discern teachers who are “good servants of Christ Jesus?”(4:6) In my personal spiritual walk, how can I be sure I’m consuming the “real food” of scripture and training for godliness?

<sup>1</sup> Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons. <sup>2</sup> These people are hypocrites and liars, and their consciences are dead. <sup>3</sup> They will say it is wrong to be married and wrong to eat certain foods. But God created those foods to be eaten with thanks by faithful people who know the truth. <sup>4</sup> Since everything God created is good, we should not reject any of it but receive it with thanks. <sup>5</sup> For we know it is made acceptable by the word of God and prayer.

- The heading in your Bible might read, “The Great Apostasy.”
- **Apostasy.** The abandonment of true Christian faith...the person who commits apostasy appeared to be a genuine believer at one time.<sup>i</sup>
- Paul said this false teaching was demonic deception straight from the pit of hell. Even worse, it came from those who appeared to be believers.
- Wiersbe: *“It comes as a shock to some people that Satan uses professed Christians in the church to accomplish his work. But Satan once used Peter to try to lead Jesus on a wrong path (Matt. 16:21–23), and he used Ananias and Sapphira to try to deceive the church at Jerusalem (Acts 5). Paul warned that false teachers would arise from within the church (Acts 20:30)”<sup>ii</sup>*
- The false teachers were hypocrites (A term from the theatre [that] describes a person who gives a false impression, pretending to be something he or she is not) and had “seared” consciences.
- The medical term is cauterized – over time the scar tissue of sin had desensitized their consciences.
- What was the false teaching in this case?
- It was legalistic teaching that it’s holier to never marry (celibacy) and to abstain from certain foods (dietary laws.)
- Okay, that teaching is a little weird but why is it “demonic” deception?

- Some background: “The false teachers in Ephesus combined Jewish legalism with Eastern asceticism.<sup>iii</sup>” You’re familiar with legalism; what is asceticism? “**asceticism** — The practice of denying bodily pleasures or inflicting suffering on the body in an attempt to attain greater spirituality.”<sup>iv</sup>
- The real issue: Any teaching that contradicts God’s word is false teaching.
- False teaching: It’s holier to be single and celibate.
- God’s word on marriage: “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18). Jesus in Matt. 19:1–9 (leave and cleave, become one flesh), though He pointed out that not everybody is supposed to marry (Matt. 19:10–12). Paul also affirmed the biblical basis for marriage (1 Cor. 7:1–24), teaching that each person should follow the will of God in the matter.<sup>v</sup>
- False teaching: You’re not holy unless you live by the Jewish dietary laws.
- God’s word on food and all of his creation: “Jesus stated that all foods are clean (Mark 7:19). He taught this lesson again to Peter (Acts 10), and reaffirmed it through Paul (1 Cor. 10:23–33). A person may not be able to eat certain foods for physical reasons (an allergy, for example); but no food is to be rejected for spiritual reasons.”<sup>vi</sup>
- Paul said in verse 4: “...everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.”
- **Is that a license to throw off restraint? If God created it, shouldn’t we consume as much as possible? Why?** Further study: Rom. 14:13–23.
- Back to the bigger issue. Any teaching that contradicts God’s word is false teaching. Here’s the REAL issue: we can only be righteous through Christ.
- Salvation isn’t about do’s and don’ts, it’s about believe and receive.
- Paul wrote to this same church in Ephesus: <sup>8</sup> *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,* <sup>9</sup> *not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV)
- Demonic deception adds to, subtracts from, or contradicts scripture.
- So, what’s a young pastor to do? Paul instructs Timothy:

<sup>6</sup> If you explain these things to the brothers and sisters, Timothy, you will be a worthy servant of Christ Jesus, one who is nourished by the message of faith and the good teaching you have followed.

- A TRUE teacher will be “nourished” by God’s word and solid teaching and will feed it to the congregation. **How can I discern if a teacher has been nourished by God’s word?**
- Old proverb: *“What’s down in the well will come up in the bucket!”*

<sup>7</sup> Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives’ tales. Instead, train yourself to be godly.

- Verse seven applies to both pastors and parishioners. Don’t be distracted by silly arguments and speculations, focus on training yourself to be godly.
- We don’t know what the arguments and tales were, but here’s a good rule of thumb from a commentator: *“The priority must be on God’s Word, not on the words of man.”<sup>vii</sup>*
- Inspirational, instructional, and scholarly teaching about the Christian life is useful but only if it is based on the word of God.

In 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NLT) Paul also writes to Timothy:

<sup>16</sup> *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.* <sup>17</sup> *God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.*

<sup>8</sup> “Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.”

- It’s good to go to the gym! But physical training is only for this life.
- Training for godliness benefits us today and FOREVER.
- Does your pastor and church emphasize solid, biblical training?
- Do we not just attend training but do we also “work out” at home?

- What's the motivation to be a church that trains hard for godliness?

<sup>10</sup> This is why we work hard and continue to struggle, for our hope is in the living God, who is the Savior of all people and particularly of all believers.

- We don't serve lifeless idols; we serve a LIVING LORD and Savior!
- "*Savior of all people*" doesn't mean Paul was a "universalist" that believed all roads lead to heaven. That would contradict his other epistles.
- God made it possible for all people to be saved IF they believe in Christ.
- Our reformed brethren would say this also points to God's "common grace" or goodness to all mankind saved and unsaved. (To learn more check out this link: <https://www.gotquestions.org/common-grace.html>)
- In verses eleven through sixteen Paul gives Timothy a list of necessary practices for a truth-teaching, Christ-imitating young pastor:

<sup>11</sup> Teach these things and insist that everyone learn them. <sup>12</sup> Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. <sup>13</sup> Until I get there, focus on reading the Scriptures to the church, encouraging the believers, and teaching them. <sup>14</sup> Do not neglect the spiritual gift you received through the prophecy spoken over you when the elders of the church laid their hands on you. <sup>15</sup> Give your complete attention to these matters. Throw yourself into your tasks so that everyone will see your progress. <sup>16</sup> Keep a close watch on how you live and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you.

- Verse twelve must have been an encouragement to Timothy who was likely in his thirties at the time. Surely it's an encouragement to our own new pastor Jeremy. God uses sanctified servants of ALL ages.

- These verses are a great “yardstick” to put up against the pastor of any church!
  - Teach scripture and hold people accountable to learn it.
  - Be an example in what you say and how you live.
  - Focus on the public reading and exposition of scripture (explaining the text.) Encourage and teach them!
  - Give it all you’ve got and stay TRUE to your calling!
  - Keep a close watch to be sure your life matches your teaching.
- What a great model for a pastor and for us as the congregation!

### So, What’s the Takeaway?

- This chapter gives tremendous guidelines that apply to both the pastor and the people in a church. Here are some questions for reflection:
- Are we being nourished with biblical truth or junk food teaching?
- Is the teaching biblically pure and free of any additions, subtractions, or contradictions with other scripture?
- Is my church focused on training people for godliness?
- Do the leaders challenge us to work to be spiritually fit and do they lead by example?
- Am I doing my part in personal, Spirit-led Bible study or do I expect the church to do it for me?
- We should all be motivated by the truth: *“This is why we work hard and continue to struggle, for our hope is in the living God, who is the Savior of all people and particularly of all believers.”* (4:10)

---

<sup>i</sup> Reid, D. G., Linder, R. D., Shelley, B. L., & Stout, H. S. (1990). In [Dictionary of Christianity in America](#). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

<sup>ii</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 2, p. 224). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>iii</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 2, p. 225). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>iv</sup> Mangum, D. (2014). [The Lexham Glossary of Theology](#). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>v</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 2, p. 225). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

---

<sup>vi</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 225).  
Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>vii</sup> <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-timothy-4/>