

# 1 Timothy 1:1-11 Bible Study Commentary with Discussion Questions

## I. Introduction (1-2)

### Cross-References

Acts 16:1-4 – Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek. 2 The believers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. 3 Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4 As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey.

Philippians 2:20-22 – I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. 21 For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.

Matthew 19:29 – And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.

Matthew 12:46-50 – While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. 47 Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.”

48 He replied to him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” 49 Pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

### Verse by Verse Commentary

1. Paul stresses his apostleship – In almost all of his epistles, Paul mentions his apostleship. He does not do this in a boasting way. Rather he comments that this is merely in accordance with the “commandment of God.” Generally Paul mentions his apostleship as a reminder to the reader that they should follow the instructions inside as he is acting as God’s messenger. Timothy of course already knew that Paul was an apostle. And they had a close relationship. So it seems less necessary to mention it here. In doing so, it is almost as if Paul has some inkling that this letter will be read by others besides Timothy. Perhaps he also intended for this letter to be read to a wider audience. In any case he certainly expected that even though he was friends with Timothy, Timothy still needed to respect his God given authority.

2. Paul views Timothy as his son – Paul was very likely single with no children. But he was nonetheless a father still too many. Timothy was one of his spiritual children and they clearly enjoyed a close and affectionate relationship. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Moses instructs the Israelites on the importance of teaching God’s commands to the next generation. Clearly those without children of their own are not absolved from this responsibility.

### Discussion Questions

- When may this book have been written?
- What is different about this letter than most of the Pauline epistles?
- Since Timothy knows Paul, why do you think Paul mentions the fact that he is an apostle?
- What can we see about the relationship between Paul and Timothy?
- How can this verse be an encouragement to those who don’t have biological children?
- What is the source of grace and peace?

**Application:** It is the responsibility of every believer, married or single, to pass God’s words on to the next generation. Through discipleship those without families of their own can both expand God’s family and also participate in and enjoy the benefits of His family. Discipleship is a fruitful outlet for expressing those natural feelings of fatherhood or motherhood while at the same time doing great good for God’s kingdom. So if you are single, do not be discouraged with thoughts like, “I will never have a family of my own. I can never experience what it is like to have kids.” Instead dedicate yourself to discipleship and you may have many more kids than the most prolific physical parents ever could. And these spiritual kids can stand beside you for eternity worshipping the Lamb.

## II. Warning against false teachings (3-11)

### Verse by Verse Commentary

1. That you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines – Here we see one key theme of Paul’s letter to Timothy. He is very concerned with the purity of doctrine. It is Timothy’s job to safeguard the teaching in the church and to correct those who go astray. In this passage the “strange doctrines” are not mentioned specifically. They are any teachings that go against the plain meaning of Scripture. Those who are grounded in the truth will quickly recognize what is strange.

**Application:** Leaders of the church (and in fact any believers) are not to stand idly by while falsehood is taught and passed off as truth. Every believer has a responsibility to make sure that the teachings in their church, Sunday School class, and Bible study group are Biblically sound. And this is especially true for leaders who are charged with overseeing the flock. It can be awkward or uncomfortable to confront those who are spreading wrong teachings. However, it is very necessary. (2 Timothy 3:16).

2. Myths, genealogies, and speculations – Paul doesn’t mention exactly what these are. For us to spend a lot of time trying to figure out what exactly he was referring to would be the same type of speculation that he tells Timothy and by proxy these men not to engage in. Generally speaking these are topics that are not spiritually beneficial. They may arouse people’s curiosity. In the “age of the internet” they may also be very effective clickbait, but they don’t bring people closer to God. There is no real practical benefit or life change that comes about as a result of discussion these types of topics. Trying to find out the answers to questions that are not in the Bible could fall into this category. Here are a few examples:

- Are there aliens?
- Did God create other humans (or species) on other planets?
- How long did Satan exist before the fall of man? When did the fallen angels rebel in the Genesis timeline?
- Will there be football in heaven?
- How many angels can fit on the point of a pin?
- Where is heaven? Where is hell?

These are a few examples of pointless debates. We cannot know the answer to these questions now. And speculating can lead to arguments and disunity. Even when speculation does not lead to these outcomes, it still is a waste of time.

**Application:** Before engaging in a debate or trying to find the answer to a question train yourself to ask the question, “What difference does it make?” If finding the answer still has zero impact on your daily life (in other words, there is no application for you to make and nothing for you to obey or change), then it is probably not worth pursuing.

See Philippians 4:8 – Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

3. Furthering the administration of God which is by faith – This phrase is contrasted with the pointless myths and speculation. Therefore another question you could ask before engaging in these discussions, “does this further the administration of God?” Or put in more laymen’s terms, “Does this build up God’s kingdom?”

4. What is your goal of teaching the Word? – While false teachers engage in many “what is the point of this?” issues, a real believer should have a simple goal. Our goal is to encourage people to love, be holy, and have strong faith. Here are a few examples of wrong (or at least incomplete) goals some preachers or teachers may have:

- To solicit donations.
- To show off their knowledge of Greek, Hebrew, Bible history, etc.
- To be commended and applauded for their teaching and sermon.
- To share a new angle of the text that has not been considered before.
- To make people comfortable.
- To build up a “fan” following.
- To generate name recognition.
- To purely impart knowledge and doctrine.

As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, without love we are nothing. The three key characteristics of Christians are love, faith, and hope. We hope for the fulfillment of God’s promises. We have faith in Him. As we hope and have faith we exercise obedience to God by loving Him and those around us. As James said, “faith without works is dead.” Also in 1 Corinthians 8:1, “Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.” The goal of all teaching should be application oriented. If a teaching has no application whatsoever then it is not worthy to teach. Sometimes the application is changing our attitude toward God or being more humble or more grateful. The list goes on and on. But every meaningful teaching point should have a correlated application.

Those with more knowledge will be judged more strictly. So hopefully the knowledge is accompanied by action!

5. Verses 6-7 – When a person drifts away from application oriented teaching focusing on love and faith, then he becomes entangled in fruitless discussion. These discussion may be filled with many words, but these words are empty and devoid of the Spirit’s conviction and life changing power.

Also, one should not talk about what he does not understand.

Proverbs 17:28, “Even fools are thought wise when they keep silent; with their mouths shut, they seem intelligent.”

James 3:1 – “Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.”

**Application:** If you are teaching a study and are asked a question you don’t know the answer to say, “I don’t know.” Be careful not make confident assertions about things you don’t know. The crowds commented that Jesus spoke with authority. He spoke with authority because He knows everything! However, we do not. So we cannot speak with the same level of authority. It is a healthy practice when teaching on a doctrine that has multiple interpretations or perspectives to share the different viewpoints and your own opinion, but at the same

time to let people know that this is your opinion. You can use words like “likely” and “probably” and “I think” instead of “always” and “I know.”

In one recent example I heard a man say that, “All dreams have a message. They are either from Satan or from God.” However, the verse he shared did not back up this statement. It would be better to say that, “God may communicate through a dream.”

6. The Law is good if one uses it lawfully – This refers to the Old Testament law. It is good and useful. But it must be understood and taught in the correct way. Paul taught extensively about the Law and how it works for New Testament believers.

One of its primary uses is to act as a mirror to show sinners the error of their way. In doing so, it shows them that they are lost and need a Savior.

**Application:** Whatever part of the Bible you teach make sure that you “accurately divide the words of truth.” God’s Word is important. We have to treat it delicately. We cannot and must not try to twist it to make it say what we want it to. Instead we must come to it with humility and as well as we can without any preconceptions or bias. Dividing it accurately requires respect and care, which is what these men lacked.

7. We are entrusted with the gospel of God – Just as Paul was entrusted with the gospel, so are we. If your friend entrusts his children to you while he goes on a trip with his wife, you would take great care to protect his children. The same would be true if he entrusted you an expensive musical instrument, a collector’s edition board game, or a valuable antique.

The gospel is more valuable than any of these. This entrusting is two fold. Firstly, we must protect the purity of the gospel, which is salvation by grace through faith. Secondly, we must pass it on and not keep it to ourselves.

**Application:** What are you doing with the glorious gospel you have been entrusted with?

## Discussion Questions

- What was Timothy’s responsibility in Ephesus?
- What may classify as a “strange doctrine?”
- Why would someone pay attention to myths and endless genealogies?
- What could be examples of this type of behavior?
- What is result of engaging in these types of discussions?
- What then should a follower of God busy himself doing?
- What are myths and genealogies contrasted with?
- Why do you share your faith (or teach Bible studies?) What is your goal?
- What qualifies as “fruitless discussion?” Examples?
- What should you do if believers around you want to engage in fruitless discussion and speculation?
- What does Paul mean that the law is not made for a righteous person?
- Who is the law for? Why?
- Have you also been entrusted with the gospel of God like Paul?
- If so, then what should this knowledge spur you to do?