

# 1 Timothy 4 • Dealing with False Teachers

## Introduction

If Satan can't get you to reject the Gospel outright, he'll attempt to distort its teachings so that you believe in a different gospel. Satan could never tell Eve there's no such thing as God after she'd already seen Him, so Satan twisted God's Word to get Eve to believe something God never said to begin with. Satan tried this tactic on Jesus Himself. Note that in Job, Satan's personal attacks on Job are only the physical ones; it's Job's friends whom Satan uses to try and twist Job's knowledge and faith in God into something else.

<sup>1</sup>But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, <sup>2</sup>by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, <sup>3</sup>men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. <sup>4</sup>For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; <sup>5</sup>for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.

## [Read v.1-5]

**Q: In verse 1, through what means did the Spirit “explicitly” say?**

A: Prophets, most likely, or directly through Paul.

**Q: Who will fall away from faith, and when? (Note: falling away = apostasy)**

A: Christians will fall away, and this will be exaggerated as the time approaches for Christ's return. Look up Matthew 24:24, 2 Thessalonians 2:3, Hebrews 3:12, 6:1-6, and 1 John 2:18-19.

*“For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.”*

—Matthew 24:24

*“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,”*

—2 Thessalonians 2:3

*“Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.”*

—Hebrews 3:12

*“Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. And this we will do, if God permits. For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.”*

—Hebrews 6:1-6

*“Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.”*

—1 John 2:18-19

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**Applications:**

#1 – Have you known anyone who was a believer and has “fallen away”?

#2 – How do you know that you will not fall away, and what will keep you from falling away?

**Q: At the end of verse 1, what do believers do that causes them to fall away (i.e., turn apostate)?**

A: They listen – pay attention – to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.

**Application:** Note that “people” are mentioned, yet the message comes through false teachers and false prophets. What is the source and how does the true believer tell? (Hint: The false teacher and false prophet always appeals to a person’s unmet felt needs. That means that demons are able to determine and appeal to our unmet felt needs.)

**Q: In verse 2, who do the demons use to peddle their false teachings?**

A: Hypocrites and liars, from a spiritual perspective. People whose consciences have been “seared,” meaning that they have been scared to a point of unable to “feel” whether or not something is right or wrong. They have become that way because they have bought into a lie by “paying attention to demons.”

**Q: What are some of the teachings these demons teach?**

A: They forbid marriage (usually includes sexual abstinence even if married), and abstaining from certain types of foods (usually promoting vegetarianism). These practices were supposed to make one more spiritual. Essentially, they replace the true Gospel of “faith” with a false gospel of “works”.

**[Read v.6-10]**

**Q: In verse 6, how does Paul use the subject of verses 3-5 as a lead-in to verse 6? How does this compare with how Jesus described Himself?**

A: He says that true nourishment involves food for the soul. Turn and read John 6:26-35:

*Jesus answered them and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.”*

*Therefore they said to Him, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?”*

*Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”*

*So they said to Him, “What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.’”*

*Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.”*

*Then they said to Him, “Lord, always give us this bread.”*

*Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will*

<sup>6</sup>In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. <sup>7</sup>But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; <sup>8</sup>for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. <sup>9</sup>It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. <sup>10</sup>For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.”

**Q: In verses 7 & 8, why is discipline for godliness greater than “bodily discipline”?**

A: It produces spiritual results for this life, and the life to come.

**Application:** What are some of the ways we involve ourselves in bodily discipline as opposed to discipline for godliness?

**Q: Verse 9 refers back to verses 7 & 8. Where have we seen these words before?**

A: See 1:15.

**Q: Verse 10 explains the reason for verses 7-9. What is the reason?**

A: The reason we pursue the discipline of godliness more than bodily discipline is because our goals and values are placed upon the person of Christ rather than ourselves and our own well-being.

**[Read v.11-16]**

**Q: Timothy is young compared to many of the false teachers he is having to confront. How does he show his maturity and spiritual age?**

A: It is in his conduct. His conduct and lifestyle lend the credibility he needs to support his teaching. In other words, it is his life that will persuade others to his position.

**Application:** Explain and apply the meaning of the modern-day proverb, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

**Q: What is Timothy to continue doing until Paul’s arrival?**

A: Publicly read, teach and preach the Word! [Note: They didn’t have the New Testament as we know it at this time, so this is an extremely valuable example of the power of the Old Testament for our life.]

**Application:** What happens to a church that wanders away from the regular reading, preaching and teaching of God’s Word? Why do they wander from this instruction?

**Q: In verse 14, how did Timothy receive his spiritual gift, and what do you think it was? Is it possible for a believer to neglect his or her spiritual gift?**

A: Apparently it was revealed through prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on him, thereby granting his apostolic authority. The gift may have been evangelism, or perhaps teaching. The text implies that one can totally ignore and neglect his or her spiritual gift.

**Application:** What is your spiritual gift, and when was it revealed to you?

**Q: In verse 15, how hard is Timothy to work on using his spiritual gift? Who is the beneficiary of the use of his gift?**

A: Very hard, to the point of pain. No pain, no gain. Gift ignored, self restored. The beneficiary is “all.” Read:

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*“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”*

—1 Corinthians 9:24-27

**Final application:** *In verse 16, how does one “pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching”? Compare with 2 Corinthians 13:5.*

*“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?”*

—2 Corinthians 13:5