

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: June 23, 2019

Lesson Title: "Staying on Course"

Lesson Passage: 1 Timothy 4:4-13

ABOUT THIS LESSON

As we read this week's lesson passage, we should remember that these words were Paul's advice to a younger minister who has taken on the challenging task of leading the congregation in Ephesus. In addition to pastoral duties like preaching and teaching the word of God, Timothy must cope with deceitful "liars" who are spreading their falsehoods among the Ephesian Christians. In order to maintain his resistance to these heresies, while performing his other pastoral duties, Timothy must keep himself in "good shape" spiritually, not neglecting daily disciplines like prayer and reading the words of faith.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

- (1) Explain the basic reason for Paul's letter to Timothy.
- (2) Identity two false teachings of the heretics in Ephesus.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Engage the class in discussion of the custom of praying at mealtime: (Was this a practice in their childhood homes? Do distractions make it difficult to maintain the practice today? Do they pray when eating in public places?) Then ask: "Where, in the Bible, are we instructed to pray at the table?" NOTE: Hopefully, some class members have noticed the relevance of today's Bible passage to this question. Call attention to the words, "God created those foods to be eaten, after a prayer of thanks," "everything is to be received with a prayer of thanks," and "the word of God and the prayer make it acceptable to God," in 1 Tim. 4:3-5 (the TEV translation).

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Explain that Paul wrote the words in 1 Tim. 4:3-5 in response to the falsehoods being peddled by "liars" (v. 2) in Ephesus, namely that it is "wrong to marry and to eat certain foods" (probably, foods that the Jewish rabbinic laws considered to be ceremonially impure). Note that Paul gives the reason for his instructions in v. 4: "Everything created by God is good" (refer to Gen. 1:31), and should be received with a prayer of thanks.

2. Introduce the next section of the lesson passage, 1 Timothy 4:6-13, by referring to verse 6: (1) This passage consists of instructions to Timothy on what he should do in order to be a useful

minister of the gospel. These instructions pertain to both Timothy's personal disciplines and his leadership of the church. (2) The word "minister" in v. 6, is the Greek *diakonos*, which is translated "deacon" in 3:8. Basically, it means "servant" (i.e., a servant of Jesus Christ). (3) "nourished on the words of the faith and good doctrine" means that the young minister should keep himself spiritually strong by studying the teachings of the Christian faith on a regular basis.

3. Comment on the terminology in vv. 7-8: (1) While feeding himself on a regular diet of authentic Christian teachings, he is warned to keep away from "godless and silly myths, which have no basis in fact (v. 7). (2) "Train yourself in godliness" (v. 7) is an allusion to physical exercise. Just as bodily health requires regular exercise, spiritual health and vigor require spiritual exercise. (3) While physical training is of value for one's physical existence in this life, spiritual exercise ("godliness") is valuable for this life and the life to come (v. 8).

4. Observe that interpreters are divided on the meaning of "the saying" in v. 9: Some believe the "saying" refers to what Paul has said in v. 8, while others believe it refers forward to verse 10. If Paul is referring to what he has said in v. 8, he means, "What I have just said is true and everyone should believe it." But if the "saying" is what follows in v. 10, he means, "What I am going to say is true, and should be believed by all Christians."

5. Interpret v. 10: Although we can't know for sure what Paul means by "to this end," very likely he is saying something like this: "We have firmly placed our hope on the living God, who wants all people to be saved, and who does save all who believe the gospel. And because we believe this, we keep on working and struggling hard to carry out our God-given mission."

6. Read v. 11, then ask: "Who is to be taught the things that Paul has been saying?" After pausing briefly for responses, suggest that v. 6 ("put these instructions before the brethren") makes it clear that the members of the church are the ones to be taught these instructions.

7. Note the advice in v. 12: (1) Bible interpreters believe that Timothy was between 25 and 30 years of age. (2) The advice, "Let no one look down on you because you are young," might mean "do nothing that would cause anyone to treat you with contempt, but set an example in your speech, conduct, love, faith and purity."

CLOSING THE LESSON

Observe that in 4:13 Paul refers to three vital functions that should be a regular part of the life of every church--the public reading of scripture, preaching ("exhortation and encouragement") and teaching.

These functions are essential to the very identity of a church.

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