

# 1 Timothy 1:6-

## Instructions to Timothy

### Fight, Keep Fighting, Finish!

...Contrary to Sound Doctrine



I said last week that it matters what you believe. The consequences for believing the wrong thing can be catastrophic! We base our decisions on what we think is true, best, right,... at the very least, what is legal or not entirely wrong/immoral! Sometimes we are acting solely on appearances – the way we think the things will look to others. But we have our reasons for doing what we do, and if that reasoning is flawed, then we can do dangerously stupid things. Our actions based on faulty information or faulty reasoning will surely have us, or the people around us, suffering some serious short term and/or long term repercussions.

\*I remember a young man in college – a sharp guy – who somehow became a disciple of Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland. I never could get that. Those guys just turn me off the moment they open their mouths and I hear their braggadocios and

swaggering way of comporting themselves - their loud, over-the-top claims regarding God's certain assurance that the Christian can and should be healthy & wealthy. So I remember hearing from this young man, who had become a disciple of these guys, that all disease and injury was the devil's doing, and therefore all we had to do was to deny it and have faith that this was not God's will for us, and that our faith would chase Satan away and bring healing. Well, I remember one time, my wayward friend was playing racket ball in one of those racket ball courts with smooth cement walls all around. He went after a ball aggressively, slipped, and smashed his knee into that hard, unyielding wall, and the wall won! He injured his knee badly! But later that week, I saw him trying so hard to deny the agony he was in! He was claiming that he was completely healed - but you could see that as he tried to walk without a limp, he was in a bad way! But he was so determined! We were young – and – well, I couldn't help it. I just laughed at him! It was all just so weird! He refused to go to the doctor because he was "denying" the pain, saying it was an illusion - a trick of the Devil! He went from being a sharp guy, a Christian with tons of potential, to being a foolish fanatic! He got off track and suffered for it! Later, he tried to pattern himself after his hero/prophets but failed dismally! BTW - Have you ever noticed that it is the young and very healthy that are attracted to movements like this, OR, ironically, it is the chronically sick and infirm, or the poor. They are hoping desperately to be healed, or to be rich! But of course, that only lasts for a time, and then they get tired of being accused of not having enough faith! They become disillusioned, and abandon hope in Christ! Some of them move on to a genuine re-focused walk with Jesus, but that is actually unusual!



So Paul talks about the problem in the early church of those who had “**wandered away**” from the important things of following Christ listed in verse 5 – a “**pure heart**”, a “**good conscience**”, and a “**sincere faith**”. Those are all inside qualities! Therefore we must conclude that the most important part of our spiritual journey is who we are on the **inside**, or who Christ is making us to be on the inside! He is changing our **inner conversation** – our **perspective** – the **way we think** – the way we **react**, our **attitude** toward.. well,.. everything! When we gave our hearts to Him, He altered the trajectory of our lives! The trajectory of our future changed because our heart was changed! The only question is whether we have desired Him and left ourselves open for Him to alter our life path, our patterns, just a little, **or a lot!** **He desires to have a large and dramatic effect upon us!** Many of us, however, seek to limit the changes He would otherwise be making upon our character and our lives. We have our own ideas for who we want to be, and plans for our life, and we want little interference, even from God – even when we have said we welcome His control! But with many, those are mere words – “**meaningless talk**” as it says here! Many Christians make a habit of limiting the Spirit’s work on their character, and they are ignoring much of the purposes of God for their lives. Meanwhile, they live for themselves - focused on their jobs, their homes, their children, their entertainments – not focusing on Jesus, or serving Him in anything but the most mundane ways. Most people outside of Christ would not be able to tell that there is a difference between themselves and **that** type of Christian! That is why I always differentiate between a “**Christian**”, and a “**Christ-follower**”. A **Christian** wants Christ on the side - a pretty **garnish**, while the **Christ-follower** wants Jesus to be the **main course** – to really sink their teeth into Him, so to speak!



A decision to follow Christ is much like a decision to go to college. A decision to go to college is a decision to learn, to explore what is known, to focus on it until you graduate and get your degree. A decision to follow Jesus is a decision to learn of the Creator/God all that can be known about Him, and of His Son, and the Holy Spirit! But not only what can be known ***about*** God, but to learn ***from*** Him. It is a commitment to learn what is on God's mind – His verdict on all matters! The only way to find that out is to know the Bible – God's written word. We want to know **what** He thinks and **how** He thinks, because we know that we should pattern ourselves after that. We always, consciously or unconsciously, pattern ourselves after someone – a parent, a grandparent, a teacher, a friend, a musician we like, an actor, someone from a book, and so on. Why not God! If we do, it will always be the **right** way! It will become the core filter of our personal truth-grid, the truth by which we measure, and judge, and accept or reject all other information/truth claims. So a true commitment to Christ is a commitment to become a student, and to learn all you can from His recorded teachings and the teachings of the apostles about Him, and to apply them in a practical way to the way we mentally and emotionally process, categorize, and respond to the things of our life – our problems, our dilemmas, our challenges – and life is an ongoing onslaught of these.

~The Holy Spirit teaches us also, but nothing contrary to what is written in God's word! He speaks through the scriptures and makes them "***living, active, and powerful***" – a sharp-edged instrument that can cut through our defenses and reach a hardened or apathetic conscience with the voice of God! However, people make the mistake all the time of assuming that the Holy Spirit is that voice they hear in their head - that brilliant spiritual insight they just had, or something they have intuited that they are supposed to do – this is the Holy Spirit! The problem with that is that it is ***much more*** likely to be their own inner voice, or even Satan getting them to ***believe*** what He wants so He can get them to ***DO*** what ***He*** wants! I have seen Christians getting into so much trouble over the years because they are quite sure that "***God told them***" something! Then they act on it and it ends up creating a mess – a mess I have to help clean up! I can pretty much guarantee that such disasters are not self-made problems that God has directed!



Paul, like Peter, (who we have recently studied), is concerned with false teachers and their effect upon the churches. He characterizes them as people that have “**wandered away**” from “**these**” – and “**these**” is a direct reference to the the Christ-following qualities of a “**pure heart**”, a “**good conscience**”, and a “**sincere faith**”. Instead, (in vs. 6), they think that following Jesus is primarily intellectual. It is, of course, an intellectual exercise, a cerebral undertaking that, as I said earlier, is determined to know as much about God, the way He thinks, and what His will for us is, as is possible. But following Jesus does not end there! It is also a heart matter – where God changes our core being – directing us and empowering us by His Spirit to become something else other than what we were. He intends to sweeten our disposition to help us love people, to be thankful in ALL things, to have a quiet mind, to exercise patience and kindness to all, and to be self-controlled. This indicated that we are being re-made, re-fashioned to look and to be like Jesus from the inside out! This is not window dressing! If we are not in process of becoming like Jesus from the inside out, then our Christianity is “**meaningless talk**”! I am not saying we have to be perfect, but we are striving to let Jesus take over in every part of our lives, so that we may be increasingly like Him! These people that Paul is speaking of were not doing that, so they were problem-makers in the church! Christ-followers are problem solvers! It is what we do! It is who we are becoming! But we are **not** problem-makers. That is a certainty! These people **made** problems! Therefore, they were not to be listened to! If their hearts were not right, then most everything else was going to be wrong! Paul does not want anyone to join them! These were the Judaizers – people that were implanted and used by Satan in the churches, that were teaching and arguing for the inclusion of the basic tenants of the Old Covenant Law/Mosaic law into the belief system and practice of Christianity. They felt that the faith had become way too gentile-ized! It had wandered too far from its Hebrew roots! But the apostles were responding that this was nonsense! The Law of Moses pointed to Jesus. When Jesus came, He fulfilled that Law and it was superseded by Him. The church had moved on from it into something **more** demanding, not less! The law of love is a VERY demanding taskmaster! It cannot be skirted/gotten around with the inconsistent hypocrisy that characterizes all legalisms! No – it is love, and love bears all things, believes all things, and hopes all things. It is an others-centered way of looking at the church and at our little part of the world – how can I encourage **them**, how can I help **them**!



Paul says – law is for **bad people** who obviously do bad and immoral things! Law has the authority to focus on and label behavior that is wrong. It lets us know what is immoral and reprehensible – where it crosses over the line and grossly violates someone else's rights, or we might not know. I mean, there are many cultures in this world that, for instance, glorify lying and stealing, as long as it is done well and one is not caught! No one told them this is wrong, so it became **right** to them and **good**, demonstrating an admirable cleverness and stealth! But the law, good law, first defines natural law. The Declaration of Independence defines a form of natural law and it begins by defining what is obvious – that every individual person has the inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In other words, no person or government has the right to arbitrarily kill us, constrain our freedom of thought, our freedom of religion, freedom or of movement, or freedom of ownership, etc... All our laws are based upon this natural premise! Even apart from God's law, we understand basic right and wrong! It is obvious! [Rom. 2:15] But Christ-followers do not need more laws. I grew up being taught that Christians didn't do "*this, that, and the other thing*". It was "law" at our house and at church, and I kept the "law". But later, I figured out it was not law that God gave, but law that humans instituted and were, in many cases, excessive, stupid and unnecessary! More moral laws and prohibitions added to simple faith in Christ, are a problem, not a solution! If we truly love God and people, we will not break **ANY** laws – not in society, in the church, at work, or in our home! We will always do unto others what we would have them do to us. We will always choose to do or say the right thing! We will live unselfishly and honestly, knowing this is how God is! So - let's stick with teaching each other how to love people better, and to always do the right thing - not how to add more futile restrictions to our lifestyle! Let's practice our faith in Christ with a pure and authentic heart! Believe me when I say that loving people requires a lot more of Christ-followers than a few prohibitions! When the Holy Spirit is being listened to, the law of love is quite self-evident. He opens our eyes to what is the everyday will of God for our lives, and He provides what we don't have on our own to fulfill God's will!

